

How The Saturday Review Drowned In Money

May
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A Journalism Review

Hume and McIntyre: Promoting The Pentagon

Edward Jay Epstein's 'News From Nowhere'

Revelations Of A Reliable Source



'Say It Ain't So, Scotty'

BY J. ANTHONY LUKAS

Q. Good morning, machine. Please identify yourself.

A. I am the 1973 model of the electronic truth detector, Uniquack.

Q. Very good, machine. Now tell me, who is the only man in the world this past year to have exclusive interviews with Chou En-lai, Henry Kissinger and Arnold Toynbee?

A. James Barrett Reston of *The New York Times*.

Q. Uh huh. And whom did the *Saturday Review* call "an American journalistic statesman sought by prime ministers and world leaders"?

A. James Barrett Reston.

Q. And who is the only American newspaperman included in the volume entitled, "The 100 Most Important People in the World Today"?

A. James Barrett Reston.

Q. And when A.M. Rosenthal, the *Times* managing editor, plays a favorite parlor game in which guests pretend they are God and declare whom they would appoint as President of the United States, whom does Mr. Rosenthal choose?

A. James Barrett Reston.

Q. He must be quite some guy, this Reston.

A. He sure is. After all, he invented me.

Q. Oh really? What for?

A. Well, he called me his electronic truth detector, but really I was his electronic bullshit

J. Anthony Lukas, who was a domestic and foreign correspondent for The New York Times from 1962 to 1972, is now a free-lance writer and contributing editor of [MORE].

**Now that James
Reston has
assumed the
mantle of
Journalistic
Statesman, Wash-
ington has lost
a great reporter.
But what
has it
gained?**

detector. When he ran into enough, he'd pile it all up in a column and turn me loose. Oh, we used to have some fun!

Q. You don't have fun any more?

A. Not much.

Q. How come?

A. Oh, Scotty and I were buddies when he was just a reporter. Since he's become a Journalistic Statesman, I don't see him much any more.

When I was a young reporter on the *Baltimore Sun* in the late 'fifties, Scotty Reston was the man I wanted to be when I grew up. In fact, almost everybody on the *Sun* or, for that matter, on any other paper, wanted to be Scotty Reston. Around the magistrate's desk at the Eastern Police Station or over a Behemian beer at Obryckhi's Crab House, we would chatter excitedly about his latest scoop or chuckle over the way his dyspeptic computer, Uniquack, deflated Eisenhower's verbosity. In that era, scornful of Ike's bumbling babbity but still profoundly respectful of national power, Reston was the apotheosis of the Washington Correspondent: scrappy but eminently respectable; brassy yet reflective; tenacious and still charming; irreverent but responsible. That marvelous moniker, "Scotty," conjured up the image of a tough little terrier, trim, well-groomed and welcome at the best tables in town—where he claimed, not the bones, but the choicest morsels—yet alert, unmuzzled and never hesitant to nip at even the best-booted heel.

Above all, he was renowned for his "scoops"—already a slightly archaic concept, redolent of "Front Page" or the *World* city desk; but Reston revived the term, lending it weight and dignity by the sheer scope of his exclusives. His first, and best known, was a whopper—the full position papers of the allied powers attending the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks Conference. Day after day, as other reporters seethed with frustration, Reston ladled the spicy broth from his secret cauldron onto page one. And there were many more to come: the "Yalta Papers" (shared with the *Chicago Tribune* only because the *Trib* found out about Reston's

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William Woodward 3rd
Publisher

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Art Director

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Washington Editor

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In organizing this year's
A.J. Liebling Counter-Convention, we particularly
wanted a panel on wire service reporting. Though
much less visible than the TV anchorman or
Washington bureau chief, The Associated Press and
United Press International are the main—and often
the only—sources of national and international news
for most readers and viewers.

The panel was scheduled for Sunday morn-
ing, May 6, and the top man at each organization
invited. H. L. Stevenson, general manager of UPI,
liked the idea but suggested that, because the
counter-convention was in Washington, UPI ought
to be represented by its bureau chief, Grant
Dillman. Dillman was duly invited and accepted.
Wes Gallagher, general manager of the AP, declined
to participate and decreed that no one else in the
house could, either. Conrad Fink, who used to be a
journalist but is now a vice president occasionally
required to operate as the AP's Ron Ziegler,
explained that "management policy prohibits any
employee from participating in an event the AP
covers."

But a peek into the "Wes Gallagher"
envelope in the AP library shows there is no such
policy. There on the "A" wire, which the AP
normally reserves for the most important news, is
Gallagher speaking to Sigma Delta Chi or the AP
Broadcasters Association or picking up the John
Peter Zenger, George Polk and William A. White
awards. When Wes Gallagher entered China last year,
the milestone moved on the "A" wire. When thieves

COLUMN TWO

BY RICHARD POLLAK

broke into his hotel room in San Francisco earlier
this year, that made the "A" wire, too. Reports that
the sports wire will soon carry his golf scores could
not be confirmed.

None of this, of course, is really very
funny. Because a discussion of the wire services
without an AP representative seemed almost point-
less, we tried to persuade Walter Mears and Carl
Lubsdorf, two of the service's abler Washington
reporters, to join the panel despite the *diktat*. But
when they called New York they were told that the
rule stood. And when we then asked what they
thought of the policy, they declined to say.

In convening the First A. J. Liebling
Counter-Convention in New York last year, we
wrote that the "journalist is one of the nation's
most foolishly wasted resources. In city rooms and
television newsrooms around the country, thou-
sands of men and women capable of giving their
communities the kind of enlightened, tough-minded
reporting they deserve are daily demeaned by the
feckless institutions for which they work." The
Associated Press is hardly the only example, but
as the largest and perhaps most influential news-
gathering organization in the world we offer it this
year as Exhibit A.

That Wes Gallagher should use the "A"
wire to promote his speeches, awards and travel
while at the same time fostering so repressive an
atmosphere that staff members are afraid to take
part in a serious discussion of journalistic issues
seems reason enough to convene Liebling II.

[HELLBOX]

Rosebuds to Clark Mollenhoff for refusing to allow
his conservatism and friendship with President
Nixon to interfere with his pursuit of Administra-
tion scandals. Since he left his job as special counsel
to the President in July, 1970, to return to
journalism as Washington bureau chief of the *Des
Moines Register*, he has repeatedly moved to expose
the Administration, particularly its handling of the
Watergate and Ernest Fitzgerald cases.

After the Watergate bugging was uncovered
last June, Mollenhoff, a Pulitzer Prize winner, urged
in his syndicated column that the President appoint
"a bi-partisan special committee" to investigate the
affair. He later denounced the Justice Department
for refusing to use a variety of recently enacted
witness immunity statutes to force testimony from
the Watergate Five.

Last October, Presidential press secretary
Ron Ziegler told Mollenhoff privately "there is no
question that the [Watergate] money came from
the Committee" to Re-Elect the President. This
was the first acknowledgement by an Administra-
tion official that the President's campaign had been
the source of the funds. Ziegler subsequently
publicly denied the quote, but Mollenhoff stood by
his story.

When the Air Force sought to close the
Civil Service Commission hearings on the firing of
Fitzgerald, Mollenhoff was sharply critical in his
column, where he revealed the existence of two Air
Force reports clearing Fitzgerald on the "conflict-
of-interest" charges that had been whispered against
him. Mollenhoff charged that the documents were
one of the reasons the Air Force wanted the
hearings closed.

Under aggressive questioning from Mollen-
hoff at a White House news conference, President
Nixon blurted that he had personally ordered
Fitzgerald fired after he revealed the huge cost
overruns in the C-5A transport plane. The Presi-
dent's statement flatly contradicted the official Air
Force position, which was that Fitzgerald's job had
been eliminated in an economy move without
intervention from above.

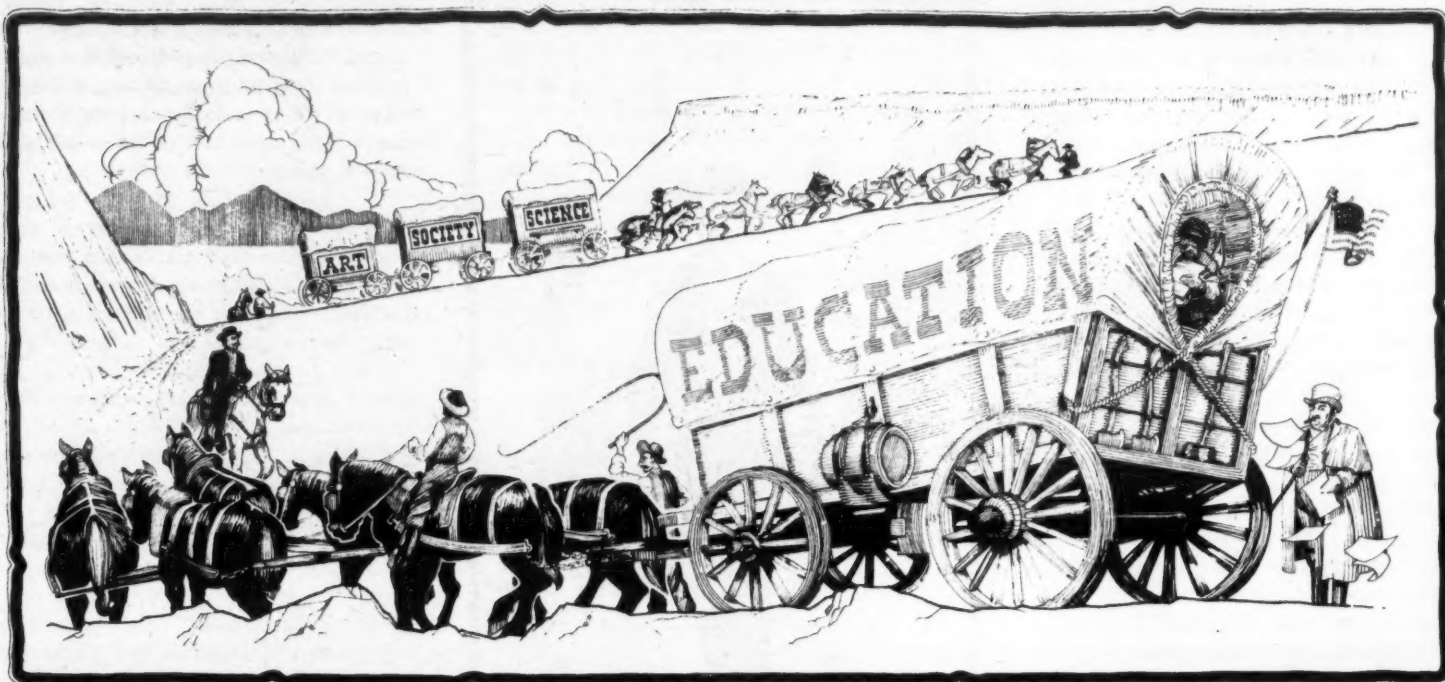
The next day, Ziegler announced that
the President had "misspoken" and that, in fact, the
President had had no knowledge whatever of the
Fitzgerald case. But Mollenhoff had proof that this
was a lie, in the form of a series of memoranda on
the case he had written the President while still on
the White House staff. They showed that Mollen-
hoff had urged Nixon to reinstate Fitzgerald, give
him a responsible job and even promote him.

The Air Force sought to bar Mollenhoff's
testimony from the Civil Service hearings (which
were finally opened by a court order) on grounds of
executive privilege. Mollenhoff stood up in the front
row of the hearing room and charged, "This is a
kangaroo court. Every effort is being made to
prevent the facts being put on the line." The hearing
examiner chastised him for interfering. "If the truth
is an interference," Mollenhoff retorted, "then I'm
interfering."

Later, when allowed to testify, he dumped
his memos to the President into the record and said
there was "no doubt at all" that Nixon knew about
the affair, "unless a half-dozen people were lying to
me about delivery of the memos."

Recently, Mollenhoff quoted Ziegler to the
effect that White House counsel John Dean 3rd was
still in charge of the President's Watergate investiga-
tion. When this was shown to be untrue, Mollenhoff
confronted Ziegler at a White House briefing and

(continued on page 22)



Once Upon A Time In The West

BY BOB KUTTNER

One afternoon last winter, Nicolas H. Charney, editor-in-chief and chairman of the board of Saturday Review Industries, invited his staff to a slide show. The topic was not the charms of San Francisco, though most present were certainly new to the area. "Nick decided we should learn something about the look and feel of magazines," one senior editor recalls, "so he produced a sixth-grade audio-visual show. Don Wright, the art director, was at the back of the conference room running the projector. Nick was on a folding metal chair providing the voice-over."

Charney went on for nearly three hours, discoursing on good graphics and bad graphics, contrasting "old" magazines with new. *Look* had died because it was not with-it graphically, Charney told the audience, which included several former *Look* staffers. Other examples of yesterday's magazines were ordered up: *Harper's*, *Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*, which would last perhaps another five years. The *Newsweek* alumni in the room, all imported at high salaries, were surprised to see a *Newsweek* cover flash on the screen. "Is that supposed to be there?" Charney inquired. Then came examples of "new magazines," those with hot graphics: *New York*, *Psychology Today*, *Ms.* and *Clear Creek*. Somebody observed that *Clear Creek* had folded.

Charney next discussed the distinction between "linear" publications, those that use primarily words, and non-linear ones, which make heavy use of graphics. A magazine must be able to pass a "flip-test" on a newsstand, said Charney, explaining that the back of the book is key, because many flippers flip from back to front. "Never mind if we have anything to say," an editor remembers thinking. "Can we stand up under the rigorous demands of flippership?" Executive editor Ron Kriss, just hired from *Time*, was shredding a napkin, absolutely silent.

It has been just over a year since Nick Charney descended on New York flashing charts

Bob Kuttner recently returned to Washington as national editor of The Village Voice after six months in San Francisco as a reporter with public television station KQED.

"We've got one foot into tomorrow," said SR's Nicolas Charney but after losing \$16 million he and John Veronis had four feet in bankruptcy.

and projections over lunches at Lutèce, offering five- and six-hundred dollar weekly salaries and the good life in San Francisco. Charney and his partner, John Veronis, had sold *Psychology Today* and acquired *Saturday Review*. Norman Cousins was out; Charney was remaking the turgid weekly into four flashy monthlies—*SR/Education*, *SR/Society*, *SR/Science* and *SR/Arts*. And Charney was hiring. For editors who had reached the heights of corporate publishing while still in their thirties, here was a heady opportunity: a chance to drop out without dropping out, to launch a fresh national magazine without having to bootstrap it, long-term contracts, moving expenses, and for the higher echelons, stock options. "We were told," one émigré recalls, "don't worry about advertising, we're going to do it from house industries. You just put out the best magazine you know how."

SR's newly translated editorial staff of 75 had scarcely unpacked in San Francisco last October when the first of several financial tremors struck.

Only after Charney and Veronis had gone back to the original investors for an additional \$5 million did word filter down that the magazine had nearly folded while the staff was out apartment hunting. At one point, SR was over a million dollars in debt to the printer, who was refusing to publish until the debt was paid. On Nov. 9, a memo assured the staff that the cash crisis was over, and urged everybody to "help us save money, large and small, where each of you can. We want to be sure that our resources go into people and editorial content, and not into avoidable delays, wastes, frills, and expenditures not central to our purpose . . ."

The authors of these sobering words had just dropped several hundred thousand dollars moving the editorial offices from New York to San Francisco, and were well into a second million converting first a firehouse, then a warehouse, into a suitable funky-mod headquarters for the new *Saturday Review*. The memo went on to explain, in case there were any doubts, that "Profit is an important, not a nasty, word. We are a very special business, a business with a high public calling, and one about which we feel strongly. But we are a business . . ."

Quite so. The editor-in-chief and chairman of the board of Saturday Review Industries habitually referred to his quadrumvirate of magazines as "the business," pronounced in three measured syllables, biz-i-ness, as if it might be a family dry-goods store. At thirty-one, Nick Charney, was still the wunderkind, breezily confident in the mystique of California living and his computers to solve all ills, volunteering charts, eager to share the secret of how he does it. In an interview before the four magazines collapsed, Charney, with no particular prompting, sketched a graph to demonstrate precisely how SR's pre-tax profit would have increased to nearly \$10 million by 1976, presto. "We have tried to take the unpredictability out of starting magazines," said Charney. "We are a group of young bright individuals. We've got one foot into tomorrow."

Like the fellow down the hall in the dorm who made a small fortune on the laundry concession and wants to borrow a hundred dollars so he can move on to charter flights, Charney looks to the future. Charney's boyish insecurity sometimes leads him to lean on weak or incompatible advisors and to

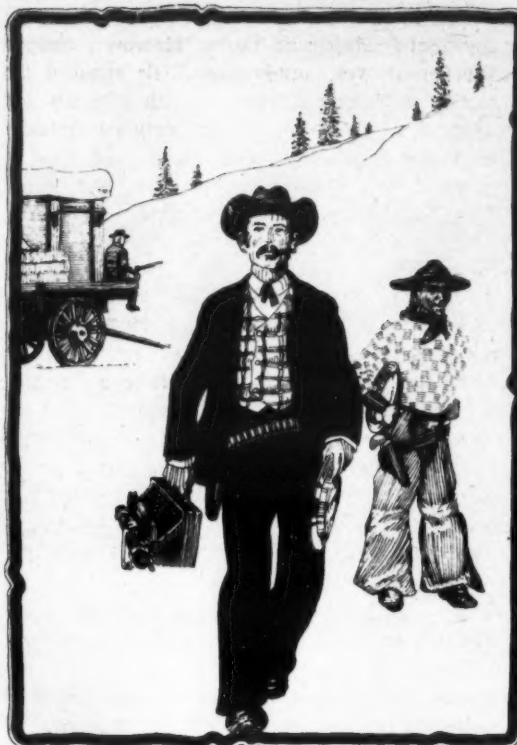
dress up his talk and lifestyle with financial hyperbole. He is part owner of a ranch in Bolinas and is still trying to unload a \$750,000 white elephant complete with grottos and artificial boulders left over from his days in Del Mar. "Nick is basically a promoter, and a brilliant one," says an associate. "But he doesn't know anything about managing a magazine."

Charney and Veronis' formula for remaking *Saturday Review* was an embellishment on several currently fashionable publishing axioms. First, this is the age of the specialty magazine. Second, monthlies produce a higher per-copy revenue than weeklies. Third, the subscriber should be a major source of direct income, not just a customer to attract advertisers. The new *SR* was to combine all three axioms (and others) into a neat equation: the general interest 11¢ weekly reborn as four specialized 50¢-and-up monthlies. The cost, Charney explained, was a mere fraction of the expense for starting such a venture from scratch, because they were building on an established magazine and a base of 650,000 subscribers. *Psychology Today*, with its slick graphics and aggressive marketing, was a rough model. With *PT* and its merchandising spin-off, Communications/Research/Machines (CRM), Charney and Veronis had shown it was possible to use a magazine as a vehicle to sell not only advertising, but mailing lists and a whole array of ancillary products, like lab kits, film strips, games, travel packages and textbooks. As Veronis put it to Robert Stein for an article in *New York* early last year, "We don't consider the reader as a \$12-a-year subscriber to a magazine, but as a potential \$100-a-year customer in the magazine's field of interest for books, records, games, posters, video cassettes, conferences, school courses and other products and services." Partner Charney insisted, however, that these spin-offs were never uppermost in his thoughts. The game plan was to put out four specialty magazines.

In short, Charney and Veronis were publishing a marketing formula. All that remained was to fill in some editorial content to accompany it. "This is the age of the specialty magazine, all right," says Alfred Meyer, who recently quit as managing editor of *SR/Science*. "But successful specialty magazines usually bubble up because of some real interest. They are difficult to impose from above." As long as the financial equation seemed to be working, Charney and Veronis let their newly acquired editors edit. The honeymoon ended with the emergency \$5 million capital infusion last October.

Actually, most of the money was used up almost as soon as it came in: over a million to pay the printer, most of the rest on a massive, 18-million-piece mailing. Less than a million dollars was set aside to operate the magazines until this summer, when Charney and Veronis hoped the renewal cycle would revive the cash flow. By February, *SR* was out of cash again.

The autumn bailout by investors Louis Marx Jr. of the toy fortune, investment banker Daniel Lufkin, and the Rock Island Corporation left Charney and Veronis with badly watered *SR* stock, amounting to less than 10 per cent of the total, and no early prospect of going public, as they originally planned. It also left a self-fulfilling cycle of bad trade publicity, a jittery advertising department, and some very nervous investors, who promptly inserted Frederick Wyle as chairman of a new "executive committee" to monitor the operation. Charney, whose own control clearly had been diminished, insisted that Wyle was just what the



doctor ordered. "Fred is a very down-to-earth, numbers-oriented guy. He is providing us with a kind of in-house skepticism, a general executive ability that the business badly needed. In the Defense Department, Fred ran Europe for Bob McNamara." (Charney once explained to a staff meeting: "When you're starting a magazine, you need a man of genius. You know, an expert in cost accounting.")

With Wyle looking after financial matters, Charney began to turn his attention to "shaping up the editorial side of the business." The editorial staff also felt increasing pressures from Wyle, the investors, and the ad department, which was run in New York by John Veronis' brother, Peter. Admen, investors, advisers, everybody seemed to be ordering or vetoing articles. An investor was impressed by one of California Senator John Tunney's speeches. An article was duly commissioned. A special *SR/Science* supplement on mechanized agriculture was overruled. No advertising angle. A similar story turned up in *SR/Society*. John Veronis asked for and got a profile of Jay Rockefeller. Fred Wyle thought a long-term publishing plan would be a useful idea. Dutifully, each of the four editorial staffs worked up lengthy generalizations on the mission of their magazine, the intended audience, as well as story ideas for the coming year. Something concrete to show investors and advertisers. Harried editors got on the phone to writers, pumping them for story outlines; several freelancers were promised commissions that never materialized, but turned up nonetheless in the publishing plan. No sooner were the plans drafted than the ad department complained that the format was changing too fast and spooking Madison Avenue.

One day in September, during the height of the first cash crisis, Nicholas Charney was leading Ed Scarfe, an investor from the Rock Island group, on a tour of *SR*'s offices. On a production board, the visitor glanced at some galleys left over from the October "premier" issue, which had closed earlier in the week. The article, a profile of then White House Science Advisor Edward David by *SR/Science*'s Washington editor Daniel Greenberg, began: "Being President Nixon's Science Advisor is like being bartender to a teetotaler..." Scarfe, a big Republican contributor, scowled, "If that's the kind of crap you print, forget it." Charney ordered the lead

changed on the spot. As it ran in the October *SR/Science*, Greenberg's story began: "The job of science advisor to the President figures large in fictional sagas of crisis and government, but in the reign of Richard M. Nixon, that is not quite the case." The editors were promised it wouldn't happen again.

It did, of course, again and again, as the magazines became "people-oriented, not policy-oriented." The architect of this new course was Peter Drucker, futurologist, management consultant and philosopher of free enterprise. (He was alternately known at *SR* as "Charney's guru" and "Mother Drucker.") Shortly after the move west, editors began pilgrimages to Claremont to sit at Drucker's feet. His grand design for *SR* was spelled out in a cranky, 40-page position paper, and subsequently at a stormy meeting in San Francisco with the editors.

Drucker's paper was particularly harsh on *SR/Society*, which he said was trying to be "just another journal of opinion." *SR/Society*, Drucker wrote, is "predictable" and "grim," as well as "anti-people." Drucker urged pieces such as: Is heroin really addictive? The early escape to the suburbs in the 19th Century. The disenchantment with big government spending. In addition, he wrote, "I would love... to see in *SR/Society* a piece that tells the reader how beautiful much of the Interstate Highway system is." Drucker also put down *SR/Society* as "The magazine of the dashed hopes of the Kennedy liberals, who now look for a scapegoat." Not surprisingly, the criticism appalled *SR/Society*'s managing editor, William Honan, whose credits include a biography of Ted Kennedy.

Honan is reluctant to discuss the contretemps. But a colleague provided [MORE] with his reply to Drucker. In it, he agreed that *SR*'s focus needed to be on "people," denied that he was publishing an opinion magazine and concluded by listing the eleven "ideological" pieces published in five issues of *SR/Society*, rating four of them liberal, four conservative and three as balanced. More to the point, Honan observed:

If an editor is forced to think in ideological terms, he will begin to "play it safe," and my dear colleagues, there is no quicker way to plunge our magazines into dullness than by creating an environment, whether deliberately or otherwise, in which editors "play it safe" because they suspect or believe that management is engaging in Witch Hunts or because management permits slurs against the integrity and good judgment of its editors... There is only one way for management to deal with an editor, any editor, in order to get the best out of him: trust him. It comes to that. Trust him. If management cannot do that, there is another solution: severance pay.

Charney declined the offer, but Honan gave notice as soon as *The New York Times*, from which he had been plucked, offered him an expanded version of his old travel bailiwick. Before he came back east, however, Honan suffered the additional indignity of having to publish a special supplement entitled "Can Business Save Us?" that starred none other than Peter Drucker.

Drucker's pro-business essay was carefully paired with a con article by New York Deputy Mayor Edward Hamilton. But this editorial balance hardly negated the fact that the supplement grew primarily out of advertising demands. Indeed, all managing editors in the *SR* family were asked to come up with a special issue each that could be keyed to ad sales. The *SR/Society* editors resisted the order at first, but finally compromised on the 16-page "supplement." One of the 16 pages was headed, KUDOS FOR CONSCIENCE, and congratu-

lated several companies for "corporate responsibility," to wit: "On May 1 of this year, Quaker Oats will introduce a learning program for young children on its Life cereal boxes. The back and side panels of 12 million packages will be used to print a series of six lessons designed to increase the learning power of children." (Actually, such puffery was a throw-back to the old *Saturday Review*, in which Norman Cousins constantly plugged the splendid efforts of advertising and public relations.) Drucker may think that business can save us, but it didn't save the supplement. Neither it nor an *SR/Arts* supplement on steroids raised enough ad revenue to pay for the paper they were printed on. (Travel supplements, on the other hand, did well.)

The great hope for the new, "people-oriented" *SR* was a how-to-do-it section in the back of the book that the editors called "departments." Introduced in February, after several months' delay, they were in display and content a deliberate copy of *New York* magazine, one of Charney's great success models. *SR* editors were persuaded that the feature gave the magazine a utilitarian as well as an intellectual appeal. But with *New York* providing highly-focused local consumer intelligence (leanest



pastrami, cleanest steam baths) and *Harper's* new "Wraparound" pre-empting the cosmic version of the genre, *SR* had staked out a huge, amorphous middle-ground.

SR was offering the sort of all-purpose, better-living tips Kiplinger's magazine served up back in 1958. *SR/Society*, for example, divided how-to-do-it into five departments: Politics and Government, Business and Economics, Lifestyles, The Law, and Communications. The assumption appeared to be that the reader, high suburban demographics and all, lived in an igloo until he subscribed to *SR*. (A piece trumpeting the economies of second-hand appliances advised: "The for-sale classified ads in your local newspaper are a good place to begin...") Other samples were genuinely informative, but the vein was heavily overworked.

With the decision to people-orient the back of the book, Charney, Wyle and Drucker moved to play down *SR/Up Front*, which had been producing much of the magazines' better writing and thinking. Originally, *SR/Up Front* was intended to help glue together a family identity for the four otherwise distinct magazines. But the concept flew head-on into the marketing plan to promote four separate

monthlies. *Up Front's* material was seen as too general for a specialized reader, nor did it provide any useful advertising tie-ins. Moreover, charged Drucker, it was "anti-business." He attacked the section as "poorly written... with animosity and spite... as grim as Nineteenth Century teetotalers' tracts, and apparently written by the same kind of people." Last December, *Up Front* was finally killed as a distinct weekly feature.

The death of *Up Front* along with the ensuing tug of war among admen, investors, Charney and the managing editors left executive editor Ron Kriss with almost no role beyond writing editorials and memos. Unlike Charney, whose enthusiasm (at least on the surface) seemed boundless, Kriss was glum, resigned and looking for a job, as were many other *SR* editors. "You can manufacture perfectly good shoes like this," says one of the editors who was bailing out, "but you can't put out a magazine."

True enough. And the unhappiest irony was that despite the corporate taffy-pull, the men and women who came west with Charney did manage to put out a magazine that sometimes contained first-rate material. *SR* published the first excerpt from the provocative Christopher Jencks thesis on education and inequality; it printed Bruce Porter's lengthy investigation of asbestos poisoning in Manville, N.J.; Ernest Dunbar's moving account of a fallen upper-class black family, and a delightful profile of the man who writes Ripley's Believe It or Not. *SR* also examined archaeological commerce long before the Hoving/krater affair surfaced in New York; and the magazine turned over much of one issue to an incisive appreciation of Vladimir Nabokov.

But the solid writing always ran side by side with the fluff. The new *SR* never quite lost the reek of packaging. And for all the charts and formulas, *SR* was not the scientific publishing operation it professed to be. "These are not evil guys," travel editor Ken Pierce commented weeks before the collapse. "I've seen Nick wheel and deal, make commitments, and change his mind. Mercury is the prevailing element of company policy. They're both very western, very open; they're not really corporate types at all."

And that, of course, was the rub. Despite the computer-era trappings, the financial bungling was legion. *SR's* rate base was raised prematurely; the 18-million-piece promotional mailing last December was an all-or-nothing gamble; the move west was a foolish extravagance. But ultimately, *SR* died because the public didn't buy it, and the public wouldn't buy it because, as several frustrated editors remarked, it never found its editorial soul. Even Charney's one authentic success, *Psychology Today* — for all its slickness — grew out of an editorial conception, not a set of marketing axioms.

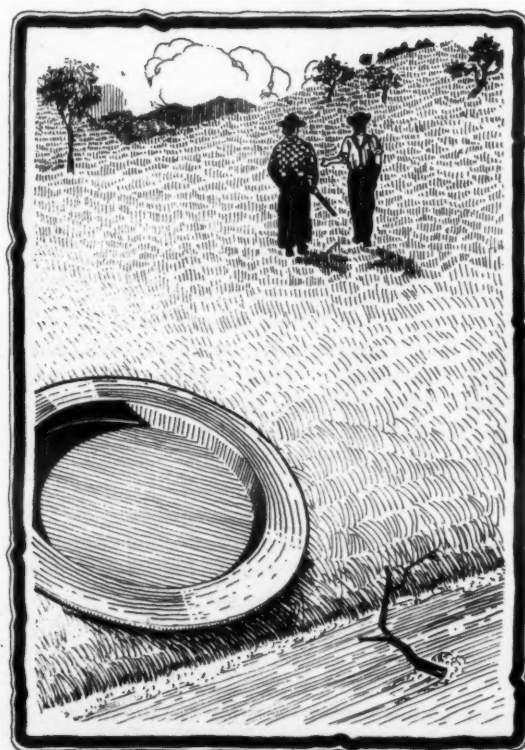
Similarly, editing a national magazine from San Francisco, away from "incestuous New York," was a reasonable idea. But then why do it with transplanted New Yorkers? In part, *SR's* identity crisis persisted because the staff never recovered from psychic jet lag. "The move was a great idea," one editor told me. "But it was much more disorienting than most of us expected. After all, journalism runs on contacts." After six months on Pacific Street, most of the staff was still looking wistfully eastward. Copies of *The New York Times* have been hard to come by in San Francisco because the first 35 were reserved for the distributor's best customer, *Saturday Review*. *SR's* monthly long distance phone bills, strictly budgeted at \$13,000 were regularly exceeding \$20,000.

On April 24, Fred Wyle called the staff together and announced that the board had filed for

bankruptcy. Charney and Veronis, in fact, had run up a net loss of \$16 million, including the \$5 million they paid for *SR*. Their huge December mailing netted a return of about 45,000 subscribers per magazine, just over one per cent; each new subscriber cost *SR* nearly \$25. Circulation had been projected at an average of 675,000 per magazine. The reality was under 900,000 all told, half of them Cousins' faithful weekly subscribers, who were continuing to write letters inquiring after John Ciardi. Still, Charney had been prepared to mortgage everything to keep going until the renewal cycle began in July. This time, the investors said no. Before bankruptcy was declared, word went out to 20 publishing concerns — including *Time*, *The New York Times* and McGraw-Hill — that *SR* was for sale. Nobody was interested.

Looking to the future, Charney put out a characteristic press release declaring that *SR* was "merging" with Norman Cousins' *World*. The staff was told that Cousins had raised nearly \$3 million to pay off creditors. But Cousins says he's not spending a nickel on Charney's back debt. "We have to take it clean, or not at all," he says. After a bankruptcy plan is accepted and the creditors disposed of, Cousins hopes to take over the name and the list. *SR's* investors would get stock in the new venture. Thanks to the kind of bankruptcy (Chapter 11) *SR* declared, the creditors include the staff. All but a handful were fired on two days' notice. The long-term contracts, moving expenses, and even back expense accounts are lumped with nearly \$4 million of other company debts to be settled at so many cents on the dollar. The investors will make the staff "a gift" of one week's severance pay.

After Fred Wyle's announcement that everyone was fired, Charney stepped forward with four cases of champagne. "Those of you who want to can go home and sulk," Charney said. "We thought we should go out in style." Several gamely accepted the offer; some went home to sulk; others rushed to the bank to exchange their last checks for cash.



Polishing Up The Brass

BY BRIT HUME AND MARK McINTYRE

Last Nov. 14, Jack Anderson reported that the Navy had illegally exceeded its personnel budget for the past several years by a total of at least \$70 million and perhaps much more. In an age of weapons cost overruns amounting to billions of dollars, the Anderson revelation might not have sounded like much. But such overspending flagrantly contravenes Congress' budgetary authority and is a serious federal crime. It carries a fine of up to \$5,000 and a possible two-year jail sentence. Although it was a slow morning at the Pentagon, the column provoked not a single question at the daily news briefing conducted by Defense Department spokesman Jerry W. Freidheim. The only discernible reaction came from UPI's Edward K. De Long, a Pentagon regular, who spotted an Anderson reporter in the press room and asked, "Where did Jack Anderson get that story, out of someone's waste basket?" There were no follow-up stories.

Although the overspending failed to rouse any interest among the Pentagon press corps, it had created a behind-the-scenes uproar at the Navy's personnel bureau. Some \$80 million had improperly and, in some cases, illegally been juggled from one account to another in a frantic effort to cover it up. When this failed, the Navy stopped shuffling funds and started shuffling admirals. By the end of 1972, six of the top seven jobs in the personnel bureau had changed hands. After the Anderson column appeared, further measures were taken to bring the personnel bureau's spending into line with its budget. A freeze on promotions was imposed and a three-month halt to the transfers of enlisted men was ordered.

Still hoping to head off a scandal, Admiral David Bagley, the head of the bureau, met with two reporters from the *Navy Times*, a weekly tabloid which, except for being privately owned, has all the characteristics of a Navy house organ. They were told most of the facts with emphasis on the corrective actions and the result was a lead story with the same emphasis. Nevertheless, the story confirmed what Anderson had reported weeks earlier. The *Navy Times* article caused a mild stir in the Pentagon press room and even generated a couple of vague questions at the daily briefings, which Freidheim fielded easily. There were still no follow-up stories.

Meanwhile, the Navy finally made a report to the House Appropriations Committee, which had been promised a detailed account of the overspending eight months earlier by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird. The 100-page document conceded that the overspending was illegal and that it totaled \$130 million. It further acknowledged that there had been mismanagement, inadequate bookkeeping and falsification of official records. It was quite a story. But it still might have been ignored had not an aide to Rep. Les Aspin, (D-Wis.), one of the Pentagon's most persistent critics, leaked it to the press.

On Jan. 8, the story landed on the front page of *The New York Times*. The *Times* story was written by Anthony Ripley, who covers general assignments, not the Pentagon. In fact, the only Pentagon reporter who took an interest was Orr

Of the 155 stories written by the Pentagon press corps during one month recently—122 were based on public pronouncements or the say-so of anonymous military officials.

Kelly of the *Washington Star-News*. The *Washington Post* couldn't find a reporter, Pentagon or otherwise, to cover the story. The *Post* ended up burying a fragment of an AP story—also not written by a Pentagon regular—deep inside the paper. The rest of the major media either used part of the AP story or ignored it altogether. At the next Pentagon briefing, there were no questions on the subject. Thus a military scandal of sufficient importance to get front-page treatment in *The New York Times* (albeit tardily) was ignored by the entire Pentagon press corps although it was twice thrust under its nose. And even when the facts were laid out in an incriminating official report, only one Pentagon reporter wrote a story about it and not one followed it up.

This episode would be of little consequence if it were merely an isolated example. But it is not. Generalizations about a group of some 30 newsmen are, of course, risky. But it can safely be said that most of the reporters regularly assigned to the Department of Defense consistently pass up stories embarrassing to the military in favor of the information the brass wants written.

The work day for most Defense Department reporters begins about 10 A.M. when they arrive in the press room on the so-called "Correspondent's Corridor," a sixth-of-a-mile stretch of hallway whose decor includes 32 glossy color photographs of the smiling Pentagon regulars themselves and a shiny plaque bearing a copy of the Freedom of Information Act. The daily briefing is given at 11, usually by Freidheim, who saunters casually into the room and sits down on a tabletop, often tossing off a self-effacing witticism that draws an appreciative bit of laughter from the assembled newsmen. Behind his amused expression, however, Freidheim is a deceptively shrewd and unflappable operator with the resiliency of a punching bag. A nationally televised example of this occurred during the American bombing of Hanoi last December when Freidheim endured a daily barrage of probing, even humiliating, questions from the press without once losing his composure, or letting slip a bit of information beyond what his superiors had authorized.

Most mornings, Freidheim reads a handful of routine announcements, then takes questions. To reporters pursuing information the Pentagon is not

eager to release, he often offers such dodges as, "We're checking on that," or "We'll try to get that for you." This may go on for days until the reporter loses interest, or the information is no longer "timely." On more sensitive matters, questions are frequently brushed aside with "We can't discuss that with you" or "I can't give you anything further."

Nevertheless, the press corps depends heavily on these briefings for guidance in getting the news. In the words of *The Washington Post's* Pentagon man, Michael Getler, "The briefing is kind of a trend-setter in that if there is anything important in terms of a change or in terms of a news event, it usually comes out there." Freidheim's words and facial expressions are subjected to microscopic scrutiny. As *The New York Times's* William Beecher puts it, "At the daily briefing you tend to look for nuance . . . you tend to look for the thing the man who is briefing is trying to avoid. You assume that there is something there worth smoking out and the effort is to try to find it elsewhere."

The fact that he has represented *The Wall Street Journal* and, in recent years, the *Times* and is one of the more senior men on the beat has made Beecher perhaps the most important reporter at the Pentagon. But even when he succeeds in "smoking out" news, it doesn't always find its way into print. When the U.S. began secretly using bases in Thailand for bombing raids over North Vietnam, for example, Beecher, then with the *Journal*, was talked out of breaking the story by a high Pentagon official. "The argument that I found persuasive for not writing the story at the time," he explains, "was that if the story came out as completely as I had it, the Thai government would be persuaded that the U.S. government or someone in it had put it out, and therefore we might be disinvited and the result might be to severely inhibit the effort in Southeast Asia and it might have cost some lives." If that sounds like reasoning more likely to appeal to a military bureaucrat than a veteran newsmen, it is worth noting that Beecher—who reported for duty at the *Harvard Crimson* back in the 'fifties wearing his ROTC uniform—has now decided to leave the *Times* to become Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

The attitude toward official pronouncements reflected in the comments of Beecher and Getler is shared by most of their colleagues. This is clearly illustrated by an analysis made for this article of most of the stories turned out by the Pentagon press corps from February 15 to March 15 of this year.* Of the 155 stories that appeared during the month, 47 were based largely on the words of Pentagon information officers, which makes them the largest single source of news. Forty-two others reported the comments of high-ranking department officials speaking at press conferences, in interviews for the record or in public testimony before Congress. Thus 89 stories—well over half of those written—had as their primary basis the public pronouncements of senior military officials or their spokesmen. In addition, there were

*The stories surveyed appeared in *Current News*, a digest of news items distributed three times a day to top military officials. While not a complete record of everything published, *Current News* nevertheless affords the most comprehensive available index of what the Pentagon press corps is writing about. Stories about military affairs not written by regular Pentagon correspondents were not included in the survey.

Brit Hume is Washington editor of [MORE] and Mark McIntyre, a free-lance reporter in the capital, works in the magazine's office there.



another 33 stories based on the say-so of anonymous Pentagon officials. When these are included, the total number of stories devoted mainly to views of or information from the military hierarchy climbs to 122—more than 75 per cent of the copy written by the Pentagon regulars during the 30 days in question.

The impact of this emphasis on the official version of events is striking. For during the entire period, American bombers were carrying out almost daily raids over Cambodia although a ceasefire was in effect in Vietnam and American troops and prisoners were bound for home. Yet the Pentagon press corps was virtually oblivious to the bombing and the Constitutional questions it raised. In the 18 briefings during the period in question, there were only three questions about Cambodia and only two stories. Indeed, it was not until later, about the time Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) challenged the legal justification for the continued raids, that the Pentagon newsmen began to press for an explanation.

Their apathy toward the bombing, which was certainly a major phase of U.S. activity in Indochina during this period, cannot be attributed to secrecy. Announcements of the raids were posted regularly in the Pentagon's information office across the hall from the press room. The reason seems instead to be that news which suggested that the ceasefire was highly fragile and that the conflict in Indochina might drag on was simply not being stressed by the Pentagon's briefing officers. There were, for example, only six stories published during the period on the infiltration of enemy troops and supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and four on the continued bombing of Laos.

Of the 48 stories written about Indochina during the period, 20 covered minesweeping operations in Haiphong Harbor, making this the number-

one topic. There were also nine stories on returning American prisoners of war. Thus well over half the copy on the war dealt with the imminent termination of America's involvement. The subjects stressed in the stories were the same ones stressed at the briefings. Reporters were confronted daily with a panoply of charts, maps and clocks illustrating and dramatizing the return of the POW's, ground troops and the removal of the mines in Haiphong Harbor. In case anyone missed the point there were repeated announcements on these subjects during the briefings. The return of troops was referred to as "Operation Countdown," the POW release was labeled "Operation Homecoming" and the mine-sweeping was called "Operation Endsweep." One might think that after several days, a briefing officer's revelation that more mines were being swept and that none had exploded would begin to lose its news value. But apparently not.

The other military issue which received major attention during the period studied was the Navy's resolution of protracted disputes with two of its major weapons contractors, Litton Industries and Grumman Aerospace Corp. On March 1, Secretary of the Navy John Warner told newsmen that having failed to reach a negotiated agreement with Litton over the price of five helicopter assault vessels, the Navy was getting tough. The company, said Warner, would be paid about \$110 million less than it had demanded for the ships. The Litton controversy had attracted considerable Congressional interest, particularly from Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), who had conducted hearings on the matter that had confirmed news reports that Litton's President, Roy Ash, had once threatened to take his case "on to the White House" if he didn't get his way.

Since Ash had now become the head of the Office of Management and Budget, the Navy's stand on the contract might have looked genuinely tough.

shrdlu

Q: There was a reference in the news report from Hanoi to "carpet bombing" and I was asking you whether those techniques are used over North Vietnam?

Jerry Friedheim, Pentagon spokesman: I don't know what the originator of that report from Hanoi regards as carpet.

—Pentagon briefing, December 29.

Q: Could you invite Secretary Warner down to tell us about his trip of the Seventh Fleet?

Friedheim: I'll carry that invitation to him; he looked a little sleepy this morning.

—Pentagon briefing, December 26.

Q: Do you expect in the future we'll have a briefing on exactly what happened up there as we've had sometimes in the past?

Friedheim: I don't have that in immediate prospect.

Q: What's the reason for the particular secrecy at this time since the enemy knows what's been hit? I can't quite understand the reluctance to discuss things that the enemy is aware of.

Friedheim: Again, I've done the best I can for you today.

Q: But, that's no answer. Enlighten us on the mystery, will you?

Friedheim: No.

—Pentagon briefing, December 19.

This view was reflected in stories written by Pentagon reporters Charles Corddry of the *Baltimore Sun* and Orr Kelly of the *Washington Star-News*. Both reporters emphasized the Navy's hard line and Litton's angry reaction. But despite the Congressional interest that the subject had provoked, neither reporter's account contained any reaction from Capitol Hill. Significantly, only reports by journalists not assigned to the Pentagon—Morton Mintz of the *Post* and Richard Witkin of the *Times*—included the views of Senator Proxmire and Representative Aspin. Although Proxmire's reaction was generally favorable, Aspin accused the Navy of "caving in" because the new price was still hundreds of millions above the one originally set in the contract.

The same day the Litton decision came down, the Navy also announced it had rebuffed Grumman's demand for more money to build 48 additional F-14 fighter jets and was insisting that they be built at the same price as 86 others already purchased. It appeared that the Navy had decided to hold Grumman to the terms of its contract. This seeming toughness was emphasized in most news accounts, especially in Getler's report in the next morning's *Post*—a report which also lacked any Congressional reaction to the decision, although interest on Capitol Hill in the Grumman matter had also been high.

A few days later, however, a funny thing happened to the Navy's contract with Grumman. It

was, in effect, torn up. Although the Navy was insisting on getting its 48 new planes at the contract price, provisions in the contract for buying still more at the same price were being abandoned. Warner called this a compromise. Reporters for the AP, the *Times*, the *Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Star-News* and the *Sun* all accepted the Secretary's characterization. None checked with Congress for reaction. Nor did any Pentagon reporter check for reaction with Gordon Rule, the Navy's top civilian watchdog on procurement who had temporarily lost his job for criticizing the Ash appointment and the Navy's handling of the Grumman contract. If they had, they would have learned that Rule, who is an unquestioned expert in procurement as well as a lawyer, considered the new arrangement a sellout.

For one thing, Rule noted, the contract with Grumman entitled the Navy to buy more than 700 F-14's at the original price. Grumman had balked after building only 86. By insisting on only 48 more at the same price, Rule pointed out, the Navy was merely requiring that the company honor the terms of a binding contract it had won by outbidding its competitors. Was it fair now, he asked, to either the taxpayers or the competition to simply forget about the rest of the contract? What's more, he said, the change was being made without so much as a nod in the direction of specific legal procedures established for such action—procedures that were observed even in the Air Force's bailout of Lockheed in the C-5A scandal. "The reformation of a contract is a goddamn serious thing," Rule said. "When you let a guy off the hook like that, you've not only reformed the contract, you've destroyed it. And what the hell did the Government get in return for letting Grumman off? What was the consideration?" Certainly Rule raises questions that deserve answers. But the way the Pentagon regulars handled the matter the public not only did not get the answers, they didn't even get the questions.

Indochina and the disputes with Grumman and Litton accounted for nearly half (71) of the stories written during the period. The result of this concentrated focus on two subjects was that there was only erratic coverage of a broad range of other military matters, many of them both significant and embarrassing to the Pentagon. Perhaps the best example of this occurred Feb. 21 when Patrick Sloyan of the Hearst Newspapers, and not a Penta-

gon regular, disclosed that the Air Force's vaunted F-15 jet fighter, one of the major aircraft under development for the 1980's, was in trouble. Sloyan reported that tests on the plane had uncovered wing defects, engine trouble and the need for a new brake design. The Air Force, said Sloyan, denied any problems but did not answer his specifics.

Although the story was reproduced in the daily digest of news items distributed at the Pentagon, no reporter followed it up. A week later, the AP reported that production of the first 30 F-15s had been approved. There was no mention of the problems reported by Sloyan. A similar story in the *Star-News* also failed to mention Sloyan's report. Two weeks later the *Post*'s Getler reported that the F-15 suffered another "incident" which damaged the engine and injured three test workers. The Air Force wouldn't explain the problem, Getler reported, and he made no mention of Sloyan's information. Finally, on March 19, nearly a month after Sloyan broke the story it was confirmed by Orr Kelly in the *Star-News*, who reported that the plane had suffered 52 major hardware breakdowns which were known to the Pentagon when production was ordered.

There was similar indifference when Senator Proxmire charged on March 7 that the Air Force's new B-1 bomber had grown to more than six times the cost of the B-52, which it is designed to replace. Only the *Washington Post*, the *Journal* and *Aerospace Daily* carried a story on Proxmire's allegation. No one else did any digging to find out if the charges were true or false. There was only scattered follow-up of John Finney's report in the *Times* on Feb. 22 that the U.S. had agreed to sell \$2 billion worth of arms to Iran, although this was believed to be the largest arms sale on record.

The new defense budget—in the hands of reporters several weeks before the period under study began—was given only sporadic attention although it is certain to provoke a long and bitter debate in Congress. And when the Arms Control Association, a small non-profit group promoting nuclear disarmament, invited a dozen Pentagon newsmen to a discussion of the budget and the President's "bargaining chips" philosophy, only three showed up. This despite the fact that the discussion was led by a blue ribbon panel of experts, including former Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Warnke.

Indeed, outside sources who might have a

critical viewpoint are consulted either rarely or not at all. The aide who handles military issues for Proxmire says he doesn't hear regularly from a single Defense Department reporter, while the aide who handles Pentagon matters for Aspin says he hears regularly from only a few. Both Ernest Fitzgerald and Gordon Rule, the two contract specialists whose forthright revelations of waste and inefficiency in procurement cost them their Pentagon jobs, say they have seldom heard from the Defense Department regulars since their original ordeals. This is significant for two reasons. Both men have fought to gain their jobs back, Rule successfully. And both are authoritative critics of military contracting practices.

Another little-utilized source of balancing information and expert opinion on Pentagon pronouncements is the Federation of American Scientists, a Washington-based organization of some 5,000 members primarily concerned with the arms race. The membership includes many noted scientists, including nearly half the living Nobel prize winners. Although the federation's press conferences usually attract about a dozen military correspondents, only Orr Kelly of the *Star-News* and Rudy Abramson of the *Los Angeles Times* regularly keep in touch. "For all practical purposes," says Jeremy Stone, the federation's director, "they never call us. They might call twice or three times a year, but they're writing every day."

The point here is not that Pentagon reporters would be fulfilling their responsibility if they simply touched base with a few more critics of the military. Rather, it is that until that first step is taken, they can never begin to make a thorough investigation of all sides of a military issue to determine where the truth actually lies. As it is, the Defense Department press corps—with exceptions—functions largely as an information conduit for the military hierarchy and even the newsmen themselves occasionally seem to recognize it. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird met with newsmen 169 times in his four years in office without once being seriously embarrassed or forced into a damaging admission. When he left office a few months ago, the press held a farewell party for him in his private dining room in the Pentagon. Amid the tinkle of ice in cocktail glasses, Lloyd Norman of *Newsweek* gave Laird a memento from him and his colleagues. It was a football on which was inscribed, "Laird 169—Press O."

The Trials Of Network News

BY STANHOPE GOULD

According to a comparison of network logs in December 1962 and 1968, the increase in network news time led to an almost 100 per cent increase in the proportion of old or dated news on the programs. It would seem that the expansion of network news to a half hour... filled an economic rather than the stated journalistic need.

—*News From Nowhere*, p. 89.

Epstein, do you have any idea of the number of times I have had to leave the scene of a breaking story after only an hour or two of shooting, allowing extra time to cope with the 75-mile-an-hour headwind that will almost double the time of the charter flight to the nearest town; for the fact that, despite its smallness, the town has some kind of major expressway construction causing a con-

Stanhope Gould has been a producer on the "CBS Evening News" for the past eight years.

"There is value in Epstein's lengthy treatment of network news, but as reportage, *News from Nowhere* is an exceedingly sloppy book."

stant traffic jam that adds a half-hour to the drive from the local airport to the local television station; for the fact that the station has an antediluvian processor that develops film at an agonizing 30 feet per minute and breaks down most afternoons; for the fact that the local station facilities and technical staff are tied up taping a kiddie show when I need them most; for the fact that the technical staff, when available, will be hostile and incompetent; for the fact that there will be a second charter plane with a second film shipment containing the guts of the story which (if the processor holds up) I will have to try to integrate with the earlier stuff in time for a "feed" to New York (edited and scripted with the deliberate air of a Spanish soccer fan) of a story scheduled to lead the Cronkite News?

Edward Jay Epstein apparently spent more time on *News From Nowhere* than any of the writers who in recent years have become a standard

part of the frenzy of network newsrooms. He worked for six months in 1968-69—with almost total access to everything that went on at the NBC nightly news operation (he spent weeks at a time there) and more limited cooperation from CBS and ABC. Although most of his conclusions are numbingly familiar, there is value in Epstein's lengthy treatment of the corporate, economic and political shackles that keep network news from approaching anything close to what it should be. But as reportage, *News From Nowhere* is an exceedingly sloppy book with sometimes astonishing errors of fact and emphasis.

What jolted me most was Epstein's designation of the takeouts and depth pieces that came with the expansion of the broadcasts to half an hour (and which I produce for a living) as "old or dated" news. I just cannot understand how he could spend all that time hanging around network news operations without comprehending the fact that getting those same-day film stories on the evening news broadcasts is mostly a losing battle against monstrous and unyielding technical problems. It has to be done, but in many cases the insane pressures of time and logistics result in instinctive twitches rather than reporting on the part of producers, correspondents and film editors. Epstein gives no sense at all of this freaky, almost out-of-control nature of much day-to-day network coverage.

On the air, of course, network news looks very together. And on rare nights, the awful imperatives of logistics and late-breaking news let up enough for a moment or two of contemplation. But there is often in New York a kind of chaos that is the perfect complement to the potential disasters in the field. The producer in New York may have two, three or four stories being fed in for the broadcast—all with horrific time and technical problems. One of the stories being fed in at the last minute may not live up to advance billing, resulting in a frantic search for a story of the same length—any story of the same length—to fill the hole. Another story, budgeted for two minutes on the air, may come in at two-minutes-forty-five, resulting in a dash by an associate producer into the videotape room (often an electronic hell, with 25 or so videotape machines recording or playing back everything from Captain Kangaroo to Sonny and Cher, all seemingly at top volume), where he or she, often moments before airtime, will try to edit forty-five seconds out of the story—trying in the midst of the babel and pressure to arrive at some pictorial and narrative sense.

The mistakes that crop up throughout *News From Nowhere* are due, in part, to the fact that the book was not updated, although the author finished his research four years ago (see box opposite). And Epstein also leaves some erroneous impressions. There is, for example, the issue of staging the news. Epstein leaves the damaging impression that virtually any re-enactment or re-staging of a news event is okay with the networks and the Federal Communications Commission. He writes that

... a television station is not inhibited by its license obligation from re-staging an event that did actually occur, at some time in the past, out of the range of the cameras, even if the audience is not informed that they are seeing something other than the authentic event. At the 1968 Democratic convention, for example, it was alleged that a CBS News crew arranged for a "girl hippie," wearing a bandage over her head, to approach a line of National Guard troops shouting, on cue, "Don't hit me." So long as the purported event occurred at some time—as could reasonably be maintained in this case—such a re-enactment is considered legitimate by the FCC.

I don't know if the CBS crew at the

NEWS FROM NOWHERE

Edward Jay Epstein

Random House. 321 pages. \$7.95

Checking

News From Nowhere was originally slated to be serialized in three parts by *The New Yorker*. When mailing out galleys of the book before Christmas, Random House indicated that the magazine series would appear in January. Instead, a single, long piece appeared in the March 3 issue. Meanwhile, rumors began circulating to the effect that fact-checkers at *The New Yorker*, although accustomed to numbing labors, were upset over the excessive amount of work required to bring Epstein's research up to the magazine's standards. Moreover, some insiders said this was not the first time Epstein had rankled *The New Yorker's* checking department. His celebrated piece demonstrating how the media promulgated false statistics on how many Black Panthers had been gunned down by policemen (Feb. 13, 1971) was supposed to—but didn't—have a sequel. Reports persist that these pieces created inordinate problems for the checking department.

Checkers contacted by [MORE] would neither confirm nor deny the reports, and one became almost hysterical when we pressed our questions. Others at the magazine, while declining to provide information or insisting they knew nothing about Epstein, nevertheless begged that their names not be used. At least part of the story is evident, however, simply from a comparison of the book and the magazine piece.

As he states in his preface, Epstein used statistics about the television industry pertaining to 1968-69, the period during which he conducted his on-the-scene research. Not surprisingly, then, his figures are considerably out of date when he mentions such important data as the number of network affiliates, viewers of each show and costs involved in each news operation. Several other numbers were adjusted by *The New Yorker* checkers, too. In the book, the cost of a satellite transmission (based on 1968-69 figures) was more than \$5,000 for five minutes. In the magazine, the cost "at the height of the war" was \$3,000 for ten minutes. The book also fails to take into account recent major events that may shape the future of broadcasting. Unlike the article, it makes no reference to Clay Whitehead, the White House's heavy-handed director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy.

The checkers, as is their custom at *The New Yorker*, dug up all of Epstein's quotations from published sources, in some cases expanding them and in most cases supplying minor corrections. The magazine went to the trouble of identifying names and references where Epstein (even though the book was his Harvard doctoral dissertation) didn't bother. In addition, the magazine corrected many small errors missed by Random House's copyreaders: "congressmen" are confused with "members of the House" and "metaphor" with "analogy"; the House Appropriations Committee is called a subcommittee in the book and several names are misspelled.

Epstein staunchly maintains there is a difference between his "study" and what he calls

"reportage." "At first, I thought the piece was going to be published like the book... with an italicized introduction [stating that the material was culled in 1968-69]," he says. "But *The New Yorker* wanted to write about the present situation... They wanted to do the article their way." He claims that it was "impossible to update the study," that he "could only write about the events in '68 and '69," and that "it seems to me to be dishonest to mislead people into thinking I was there [at the networks] now." He adds that William Shawn, *The New Yorker's* editor and the man to whom he dedicated the book, "expressed concern to me that the book kept referring to things in '69... I could never make anyone understand that if I gave an example, I was there long enough to be able to say that it typified something."

In spite of this conflict, Epstein insists that the magazine had a right to alter his material and that he endorsed its objectives. Instead of hostility, he says, he felt only "frustration and confusion" at not having "the competence to transform my book into a magazine piece." In order to avoid a "deterioration of personal relationships," he left the matter entirely in the hands of Shawn and another editor, William Whitworth. "Shawn said he had never seen a writer be so docile," Epstein recalls.

In a rare interview, Shawn declined to discuss whatever problems, if any, he had with Epstein. But he did offer an observation about the way *News From Nowhere* was published. "What should have been done—and what we did—was to check to see if the things that were true in 1969 were still true today," he said. There was another concern, too. "I was very worried," said Shawn, "that it [the piece] could be used somehow or other to support the government's criticism." He feels that because the piece dealt with that criticism (by including much about Whitehead, for example), the problem was avoided. Doubtless the book needed updating badly, but in fairness to the author it should be said that a careful reading of *News From Nowhere* hardly leaves the impression of aid and comfort to the enemy, as our reviewer points out.

Anyone who ventures into the tricky field of media criticism has a special responsibility to get things right. Many of Epstein's conclusions are sound, but for a book four years in the making he does not pay sufficient attention to detail. Yet the problem of errors is hardly confined to *News From Nowhere* or Random House. On the contrary, in an industry that rolls out some 30,000 titles a year, the book, checked for errors, is almost extinct. As Shawn puts it, discrepancies between a book and a *New Yorker* excerpt are not at all uncommon and that, for some publishing houses, the magazine is, in effect, an editing service. "A number of publishers have gotten into the habit of not setting a book into type until they get our final version," he said. "What little editing they used to do they seem to have dropped."

—THE EDITORS

convention rigged the scene with the "girl hippie;" certainly no one in television news would claim it *couldn't* have happened. I do know that anyone caught doing something like that would be fired, and to suggest that this sort of thing is standard operating procedure (either in 1968 or now) is either irresponsible or dumb. Sure, the lens frequently lies and there *are* things that the network camera teams do as policy that are staged—let's get the farmer to stand by his tractor for the interview. But Epstein doesn't bother with these kinds of distinctions. "Rather than shooting endless amounts of film until those actions naturally occur which the correspondent or producer believe represents the 'real' story," he writes, "individuals may simply be asked to enact them."

Exactly wrong in most cases. One of the clichés of network coverage is the incredibly high ratio of film shot to film used on the air, noted by Epstein elsewhere in the book: "... each camera crew generates a prodigious amount of film—about twenty times as much as is used in final stories..." So, network crews *do* shoot those "endless amounts of film" in trying to get the real thing. Epstein correctly points—as has every critic of TV news as well as every thoughtful person in the business—to the distortions built into the process of editing a minute or two-minute story out of an hour of film. But his treatment of "staging" is almost totally distorted.

A major example of phonying the news presented by Epstein is the famous pot party allegedly rigged by a reporter for WBBM-TV, which *News from Nowhere* correctly identifies as the CBS owned-and-operated station in Chicago. What Epstein does not say (perhaps he does not know) is that, unlike NBC where he did most of his work, and where network and local news departments are integrated, at CBS network and local news departments are *totally separated*. There are legitimate examples of where the networks are guilty in this area—but hanging the blame for the bogus pot party on CBS network news is another example of the carelessness that runs through this book.

It's a real drag for me to have to go on like this, defending the company I work for. The problem is that I know what happens at CBS, and simply did not have the time to check out everything Epstein says about ABC and NBC. Epstein is correct when he tells us that "the similarities at all three networks greatly outweighed the differences," but he mentions several things that he says go on at the other networks that do not happen at CBS. On film editing, for example, he writes: "Editors also are expected to select the appropriate background sounds from a library of tape recordings, which include such titles as 'Washington Gallery Hubbub,' 'Arab Mumbles,' 'Crowd Cheering,' 'Crowd Chanting,' 'Pickets Yelling,' 'Noisy Riot,' 'Gunfire,' and 'Black Demonstrators'."

I don't know if the other networks still do this, but for several years it has been a CBS rule that all sound used in a piece *must* have been recorded at the scene of the story. Epstein leaves the clear impression that the use of effects like "Arab Mumbles" is common to all three networks.

Epstein is also critical of camera crew assignment practices (in a passage made almost impenetrable by his confusion of NBC with CBS). He charges that the networks all emphasize the news conference and other events staged for television. It's hardly news, of course, that cameras (and printheads) tend to cluster around events announced ahead of time and scheduled in the morning. But, in trying to go beyond the obvious,

Epstein has a bad, one-dimensional feel for the whole critical area of television news assignments and coverage.

He seems to think that the key to better coverage is an unlimited number of cameramen. After quoting network accountants on the high cost of news film crews (about half a million dollars *per crew* for NBC in 1968, according to *News from Nowhere*), Epstein goes on: "From a journalistic point of view [emphasis mine], the more camera crews the better, since the more news beats and potential happenings that can be covered by camera crews, the greater chance to capture the significant news of the day." Right. No one in television news would argue against more crews. But Epstein misses the real point: if a large number of additional camera crews would cost far more than the networks will ever spend, what about a heavy increase in the number of correspondents, researchers and field producers who each cost a fraction of the money it takes to keep a camera crew operating? What about an added zap of network reporting *without* the cameras?

This *should* be the next big step for network news. If the evening news programs are ever to break away from their hopeless dependence on the wires and *The New York Times* (Epstein says that, by actual count, AP and UPI were the source of 70 per cent of the domestic stories assigned by one network during December of 1968) it will be because there are more journalists working with pencil and paper to find the right stories for the cameras to shoot.

This would be a move toward some real form of television journalism. In terms of news gathering, the networks now provide the appearance of a news organization—not the reality. The Cronkite News (which, says Epstein, made a profit of \$13 million in 1969) has only *one* researcher, and she is generally dispatched to discover the correct way to pronounce the names of Asian politicians and has virtually no time to spend digging for stories. A network news program should have (*could* have, at relatively little cost) eight or ten researchers looking for and checking out the kinds of stories that the broadcast should be doing and can do well.

More basic to the problem—Epstein is right

on the money here—is the fact that the typical television correspondent is generalist with jet lag. The networks do not have enough correspondents, and therefore have to move the ones they do have from story to story at an incredibly hectic and unpredictable pace. Epstein also zeros in on the downright phony aspect of the business that has given us the field producer as shadow journalist. On many takeouts, the reporter on the screen has had very little to do with getting the story on the air. The idea and research for the story usually come from the field producer, who then determines what is to be filmed, often does much of the filming alone with the camera crew (while the correspondent who will wind up on the air with the story is hippity-hopped to God knows how many other assignments), and then (still without the correspondent) screens the story and blocks out a film treatment that dictates how the correspondent must write his script.

Moving away from this kind of madness would cost money—for more specializing correspondents and *enough* correspondents to allow for coverage of spot news as well as solidly reported longer pieces. The outlook for such an expanded news-gathering capability is bleak. The argument generally heard at the networks is that *any* kind of major expansion would be justified—only if the evening news broadcasts went to an hour. Forget about the hour for now. As Epstein points out, the half-hour network news program had to be jammed down affiliate throats in 1963 (the 15 minutes of extra news time the networks got from the affiliates meant the networks also got a big increase in revenue from commercials—money the affiliates were forced to give up) by the FCC in an Administration that did not harbor anything like the Nixonian contempt for the networks.

Without an hour, the only reason to try to increase the real journalistic contribution to the network news programs would be excellence. But, the network executives interviewed by Epstein did not see making the broadcasts journalistically better as a means of attracting more viewers. Epstein says they see network money better spent on building up the programs that lead into the news and on hiring anchor men.

It's more complicated than that. Clearly, the networks spend a lot more money than necessary simply to fill up the newscasts with a presentable number of film stories. For competitive reasons, and because traditional journalistic values *do* operate and to some extent at times override the network money people, vast amounts are spent to get pictures of breaking news stories. It's also true that field producers (and the better correspondents) are given large amounts of time (often several weeks) and money (thousands of dollars) to do the longer stories for the evening news programs.

Epstein's major conclusion is that "... the pictures of society as shown on television as national news are largely, though not entirely, performed and shaped by organizational considerations. To maintain themselves in a competitive world, the networks impose a set of prior restraints, rules and conditions on their news divisions." The president of one of the news networks told Epstein—with some candor and a lot of understatement—that there are "... limits on how far we can go in upsetting the network's apple cart."

The apple cart is made out of affiliates. If you run around the country as I have for a few years, producing film stories "fed" to New York from affiliate stations, you discover the flesh-and-blood basis for the paranoia of network news executives confronted with Clay Whitehead's "ad-



vice" that station owners police network news or watch out for their licenses. The affiliate bosses have always been ripe for this sort of thing. Aside from their standard and heartfelt bitching about network journalists as radic-libs and outside agitators, the depth of most station owners' commitment to the news is best measured by their news programs. Most of them are junk. There are perhaps only a dozen really professional local news operations out of the hundreds of affiliates around the country. (This subject needs a book badly.)

A network official talking to Epstein in 1969 about Agnew foresaw Whitehead:

Huntley, Brinkley and Cronkite could sing, dance or strip in their New York studios, but if the affiliates don't choose to take the show in the first place, it wouldn't raise an eyebrow from here to Monterey. Each of the networks owns five stations. That's fifteen among the three of them. But their affiliates add another 550 stations to the networks. Simple arithmetic will tell you that if the affiliates, out of conviction or fear, rise in rebellion and pull the plug, then the networks are sunk... Let just one license be revoked for bias, and the affiliate revolt will start. The networks will not be able to deal with it."

The network news departments have an out—if they want to take it. It's possible to keep the government and the affiliates pacified and still be able to say the news is being "covered." Take one of the really complicated government scandals. It's a

question of how the treatment goes. The evening news programs can get off the hook with the usual series of minute-and-a-half to two-and-a-half minute reports—generally incomplete, often produced under that awful kind of deadline pressure peculiar to television news, and incomprehensible in any real sense to most viewers. (Even the ones who are not trying to cook dinner or pry their kids apart while the news is on.)

There are alternatives. One kind is the decision by CBS executives to clear exceptionally large chunks of air time on the evening news for a series on the Russian-American wheat deal. Much of what was broadcast was a recap in one program of information that had already been on the air in the standard, fragmented series of reports. Implicit in the decision was an admission that very few viewers could pull together any overall idea of the story from what had been reported about the wheat deal on the Cronkite News to that point.

The handiest stick the government and the affiliates have for beating down any regular efforts on the part of the nightly news programs toward tough investigative and background reporting is the FCC's "Fairness Doctrine." Epstein notes the constant pressure on the networks to—I think Howard K. Smith said this—go out and find someone who says it's all right to kick dogs. Letting both sides have their say is one thing, but in practice the idea of "fairness" reduces the role of many network journalists to a sort of casting director: just get the people on each side of an argument who look and

sound right. Given the lack of real resources for reporting by the networks, it often comes down to a free ride for the interviewee—free of any real inquiry and evaluation, any attempt to probe for what is nearest the truth or what may be false. On the evening news, time limitations and traditional notions about "pacing" tend to result in sound cuts delineating controversy running a socko 20 to 40 seconds of unchallenged sloganeering—a format that could homogenize an argument between Albert Schweitzer and Attila the Hun into a tossup.

There is little in *News From Nowhere* that provides ammunition for Agnew and Whitehead. Epstein portrays the average network journalist as the perfect implement for whatever degree of blandness is required. The correspondents and producers that Epstein talked with come off like Kubrick's astronauts: plastic, efficient corporate puppets. I think it's better than that, but not better enough. Therefore, the question: is this as good as it gets? Aside from new technical miracles, will network news always be a case of stunted growth, arrested journalistic development?

Epstein does not dream enough. He maintains that the "point is not to change news, but to understand its limitations." Wrong again, Epstein. I can only conclude that, in some misguided way, you are trying to be supportive in the face of the government threat to the networks. I think the real answer to that threat is for network news to grow up—stop crying and get better and tougher. But probably I am dreaming too much.

How To Become A Reliable Source

BY ANDERSON PRICE

In May of 1960, the day after his surprise defeat at the hands of John F. Kennedy in the West Virginia Democratic Presidential primary, Senator Hubert Humphrey was considering mounting evidence that the Kennedy organization had stolen that election in a way that can only be done in West Virginia. Humphrey lieutenants in the field were reporting that Kennedy operatives had made handsome payments to popular local candidates to list Kennedy on their slates, assuring him the votes of their supporters. Recognizing that Kennedy's West Virginia victory, by supposedly burying the Catholic issue, had clinched the nomination, Humphrey felt that his only hope was to have the results declared a fraud. In a series of discussions with his advisors, Humphrey had about decided to get affidavits from the field and make formal charges in federal court. The move might have succeeded—and just possibly another man might have ultimately occupied the White House—had one of Humphrey's trusted counselors not leaked the slating story to reporters, who wrote it up as a defeated candidate's sour grapes. I was that trusted counselor.

For the past 20 years, I have spilled secrets in Washington on a scale that would qualify me for the firing squad in Spain, South Vietnam and much of what President Nixon calls the "free world." I have had a hand in the resignation of Sherman Adams, the downfall of Bobby Baker, and the embarrassment of countless politicians whose greed for power was matched only by their respect for money. If a Washington reporter is looking for a

Anderson Price is not the name of a Washington accountant who has been valuable to political reporters since the Eisenhower Administration.

"For the past 20 years, I have spilled secrets in Washington on a scale that would qualify me for the firing squad in much of what President Nixon calls the 'free world'."

scandal or a hot political tip, the word has gotten around to call me, and I will do my best to oblige.

Why do I do this? Because I like reporters better than any other kind of people. I like to be seen in their company in swank restaurants, to eat their food and drink their liquor as they ply me for leads. I love to exchange bits of political gossip, to join in the reporters' cynical assessment of politicians and their jealous criticism of the columnists, who make so much more money than they for what seems to be easier work. My biggest high comes when, in the middle of a formal dinner party, I let drop a particularly juicy item and a reporter takes his pad out of his dinner jacket and starts making notes. I will give reporters almost anything they want to keep them interested in me.

I wanted to become a reporter myself, but my father insisted I become an accountant. That was in the days when young men did what their fathers told them. You can't imagine how dull my profession is, or how it narrows the interests of the people who work in it. If it weren't for the fact that, with the new disclosure rules on campaign contributions and expenditures, a good accountant is indispensable to politicians, I would be frittering away my life helping large corporations lie to the Internal Revenue Service and to their stockholders. As it is, I am a confidant of Senators and Governors. They tell me things because they trust me and need my expertise. They even listen to my suggestions on political matters, because they need my knowledge of financial matters to keep them out of trouble. So I sit in on their meetings with their top political advisors. By relaying just a small part of what I learn, I can be part of the exciting life of a journalist without ever having to chase around after stories or meet a deadline.

How did I get my reputation as a reliable source? I'm the guy that got Harold Talbot. You may not remember the name, but Harold Talbot was Secretary of the Air Force in the Eisenhower Administration. That is, until he was caught writing letters to defense contractors on official Air Force stationery—to drum up customers for his old engineering firm. It was the first major scandal for old Ike, who had promised an Administration that was "clean as a hound's tooth."

I was working in the Comptroller's Office of the Air Force at the time. A representative of a defense contractor showed me one of the letters and said it looked a little strange. I thermofaxed the

(continued on page 14)

Freebies

Faithful as the *Times* editorial limning the glories of spring, the American Newspaper Publishers Association swept into town last month for its annual festivities.

At their major sessions, the publishers heard from an all-too-predictable lineup of newsmakers, including Henry Kissinger, Gloria Steinem and Peter Brennan. But our eye was caught by a panel discussion intriguingly titled "How Are You Fixed for Freebies?"

In the elegant Empire Room we found a scant 100 publishers slumped beneath the crystal chandeliers. Up on the dias, George Gill, managing editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, was reporting on a study conducted by a "professional standards" committee of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association.

"Two of every three managing editors said they'll accept free trips. One out of two ME's will accept expense-paid trips overseas. . . Ten per cent responded that, yes, they do accept ads on condition that a reporter will write a feature piece on the business."

But many editors blamed their publishers for this state of affairs. One wrote that "when those in management above me not only accept gifts, junkets etc, but actually solicit them, I find myself in a most difficult position." Another editor said of his publisher "he's a good man, really, but as a business-side product he's been a wheeler-dealer too long."

Gill said publishers often argued they could not afford the price of many events. "But what price purity?"

He said he had recently consulted the 1972 pretax profit margins of several publicly-held newspaper groups and found percentage figures like these: 17.7, 20.5, 28.1 and 31.5. "I'd be willing to wager that the price of purity wouldn't nip more than three tenths of a percentage point off those numbers."

When the panelists had concluded, the chairman asked for questions. Silence. "No questions on professional standards?"

"We're all too embarrassed to speak," said a disembodied voice from the floor.

Then up got Joseph Nixon of the Michigan City (Indiana) *News Dispatch*. "I'm puzzled," he said. "We're talking about freebies and junkets. But right here at this convention we have paper companies offering free trips to their plants which then turn into fishing expeditions. We have suppliers and news syndicates throwing all the lunches and cocktail parties you could go to? How does all that fit into what we're talking about? (The biggest free-load of the week is King Features' "Meet the Stars" luncheon, this year starring Debbie Reynolds. But one editor told me "Hell, every corner suite in the Waldorf this week has some company handing out free drinks. There are more freebies at this meeting than most managing editors see in a lifetime.")"

Nobody on the floor had any answers for the man from Michigan City, so George Gill and Paul Poorman, managing editor of the *Detroit News*, began trading one-liners.

"Where's the Associated Press Managing Editor's meeting going to be held this year, George?" asked Poorman.

"Disney World," Gill replied with a rueful grin. "We're paying for everything we get down there, but how do you explain that to your staff?"

"I think our staffs expect us to go to Disney World," said Poorman.

"With that," the chairman cut in, "I'll adjourn the session and you can each attend the cocktail party of your choice." —J.A.L.

Writer's Cramp

Tax time this year proved especially burdensome to New York City's free-lance writers, who are now required to pay a second local tax. In addition to Forms 1040 and related schedules, IT-201 and NYC-201 or 203 that their salaried colleagues must file, freelancers are saddled with NYC-202, the unincorporated business tax return. In 1971, the City Council rubber-stamped a Lindsay administration decision that writing is no different than, say, the TV repair business and should be taxed in the same way. "All we did was to put professionals on the same level as the individual proprietor of any business," a Finance Administration official explained. "Why should there be a difference? They're all in it the same way, to make a dollar."

The Council's specific act was to repeal the section of the administrative code that exempted self-employed professionals from the tax. The sole purpose was to raise money, for 1971 was the year John Lindsay had a \$1.14 billion budget gap and was proposing measures like a six per cent tax on rent and \$200 permits to park in the central business district of Manhattan. The City Council passed the bill without debate.

As a result, a free-lance writer who earns \$12,000, for example, will pay more in taxes than a salaried journalist who has the same income and is entitled to the same number of deductions. The freelance must pay both the personal income tax and the unincorporated business tax on the same income.

The business tax is a flat four per cent of the taxable business income. Four per cent may not be high by Federal standards, but it is high by city standards: your income from salary would have to exceed \$30,000 a year before you hit the four-per cent New York City personal income bracket. A writer whose "net profit" is \$9,300 or less ends up by not paying the tax. But one who makes \$12,500 or more will pay at least \$200 extra in taxes.

Although doctors, lawyers, accountants, and architects are also subject to the unincorporated business tax, it can be argued that few writers (with the exception of that small minority with fat book contracts and lucrative subsidiary rights sales) make as much as other professionals. Indeed, the \$9,300 floor probably exempts a large number of freelancers from the tax—but not all, of course.

It's difficult enough for freelancers to live in the city, what with its high rents and ever-dwindling magazine market, without this added penalty. Nevertheless, the tax is not being challenged—either by individuals or by writers' organizations. The Society of Magazine Writers has yet to take a position on the matter, and the Authors League of America, while opposed to the tax, has decided against taking action toward ending it.

—LESLEY GOLDBERG

Art News?

In his first issue after becoming editor and publisher of *Art News* (October, 1972), Milton Esterow, a former *New York Times* cultural reporter, promised his readers: "We are going to open your eyes to a more penetrating picture than you have ever seen before of this strange and exciting [art] world. *Art News* will explore more than ever. There will be debates on the most profound topics being discussed in art." In addition to reviews and features, he wrote, "there will be monthly reports filed by important critics, historians and journalists assigned to cover the most prominent museums, galleries, auctioneers and collectors throughout the world's art capitals."

Despite these lofty ambitions, Esterow's magazine has all but ignored the biggest art story of the year—the de-accessioning policies of the Metropolitan Museum, first reported by the *Times* in February, 1972. The issue has been relegated to the back of the book, where it has been handled in two short pieces together occupying less than five columns of space. *Art News* has also failed to comment on the controversy surrounding the Met's Euphronios krater.

The magazine's most recent piece on de-accessioning at the Met (April, 1973) consisted solely of statements by two art associations and State Attorney-General Louis Lefkowitz. The earlier piece, John Hess' "Should a Museum Sell its Works?" (January, 1973) was a straightforward account of a debate on the subject held at New York University last November. Hess, a veteran *Times* reporter, was originally asked to write a piece about the problems associated with the disposal of museum art, based on interviews with authorities throughout the country.

(THE BIG APPLE)

After making several phone calls, he decided that such a general piece would be "dull;" instead, he submitted to Esterow a 3,500-word article dealing specifically with the Met controversies of the previous eight months. Esterow rejected the piece on the grounds that it didn't fulfill the assignment. Hess' next assignment was to cover the NYU debate. He says that material reflecting badly on Met director Thomas Hoving was deleted.

Professor John Rewald, a noted authority on Impressionist art, also attempted to publish a critical article on the Met in *Art News*. Rewald maintains that Esterow had urged him to contribute to the magazine, stating he "would be honored to have me on his masthead." In the fall, Rewald offered to re-do what he calls a "violent" piece on Hoving that he hadn't been able to sell to other magazines. He recalls that Esterow told him that a piece on de-accessioning was already in the works (meaning the Hess piece), but he was determined to write the story anyway. It was turned down and later appeared in the January-February, 1973 *Art in America* under the title, "Should Hoving Be De-Accessioned?"

Editors, of course, have the right to turn down pieces, even those they have commissioned, and even those by luminaries in their field. And authors are notoriously ungracious when their efforts are rejected. But both Hess and Rewald later began to suspect—with no little credibility—that Esterow's timidity had something to do with the fact (made known through a statement of ownership included in the November issue) that Douglas Dillon, the Met's president, is a limited partner in the corporation that owns *Art News*. Esterow, who refuses to comment on the incidents described by Hess and Rewald, insists that Dillon has never attempted to put pressure on *Art News*. "That's like saying David Merrick can influence a Clive Barnes review of a Merrick production because Merrick is a minority stockholder of *The New York Times* or that Merrick could influence Arthur Ochs Sulzberger in the *Times*' coverage of the theatrical world," scoffs Esterow. He feels that *Art News* has given the Met controversy "as much space as in my editorial judgment it deserves at this time." —T.P.

Benched

On March 22, Fred Loetterle was relieved of his environmental affairs beat at the *Daily News* and reassigned to rewrite duties. In a memo explaining why Loetterle was no longer to be sent out of the office without special

permission, metropolitan editor Jack Smee charged that, "three times within a week this office has received complaints about his conduct, his harassing, demanding and offensive interrogation of persons who had a right to expect civil treatment." This "pattern of conduct" has rendered him, wrote Smee, "a liability to the *News* in covering stories where civilized discourse between reporter and news source is presumed as a minimum level of conduct."

During the three years that he has specialized in environmental matters, Loetterle (who came to the *News* in 1964 from a monastery) has been widely praised for his energy and commitment and is generally regarded as one of the best local reporters in his field. At the same time, though, he has frequently been criticized for his abrasiveness. Former Environmental Protection Agency head Jerome Kretchmer, hardly a mild-mannered man himself, and others have described Loetterle as "abusive." Some of his more traditional colleagues, as well as management, are also turned off by his long hair, bushy beard and casual attire.

Loetterle's travails at the *News* began more than two years ago while he worked on a major story about the dismissal of executive assistant U.S. attorney John Burnes, who lost his job for charging that the Justice Department had intervened on behalf of General Motors in a pollution case. When the *News* began backing off from the Burns story, Loetterle contended that the paper was responding to pressure from Washington and berated Managing Editor Michael O'Neill in full view (and hearing) of the city room staff. This time, too, Loetterle has accused the *News* of giving in to public officials.

Two of the incidents to which Smee was alluding in his memo to Quinn occurred the day Loetterle was benched—also the day his story raising questions about the Sanitation Department's "Sunshine Fund" was published. In that piece, Loetterle reported that some sanitation men say they have been forced to contribute to an annual department fund drive which is not registered as a charitable organization. Hoping to do a follow-up story, Loetterle arrived that morning at the office of Deputy Commissioner Carl Butler, the department's financial administrator and a member of the committee that controls the fund.

Because he insisted on waiting even though Butler refused to see him, Loetterle got into a fight with a sanitation clerk and later with Dick Napoli and Jim Marshall, press secretaries for the Sanitation Department and the Environmental Protection Agency. The scene became heated (although Loetterle maintains adamantly that he kept calm), culminating finally in a call from Smee order-

ing Loetterle to depart immediately for a hearing on the use of phosphates. Smee claims that a woman present at the hearing called the *News* that afternoon to complain about Loetterle's behavior.

The third incident occurred the week before at the annual meeting of the American Paper Institute, of which the *News* is a sponsor. Loetterle discovered that the featured speech had been altered so as to omit the paper industry's rather startling figures on wastage. In the course of obtaining those figures, Loetterle met with resistance from two of the Institute's flacks, whom he has since taken to court on harassment charges. They, in turn, have filed countercharges, and the case is expected to be tried in May.

In a letter to the New York Press Club, Loetterle asserted that, "the *Daily News* succumbed to political influence in removing me from a major investigation of the city's Sanitation Department and from several other probes involving the Lindsay Administration." Loetterle bases his argument on the fact that Smee's call to him at the Sanitation Department was prompted by a complaint from Tom Morgan, the Mayor's press secretary. In checking with the City Hall press office, Loetterle was read a message from O'Neill to Morgan informing him that "the whole situation you called about has been straightened out." Morgan declined to discuss his intervention, but the *News*' position is that he was trying to prevent the inflammatory situation in the Deputy Sanitation Commissioner's outer office from worsening. "We don't believe in banging our heads on stone walls," says Smee.

Loetterle's charge that the *News* gave into political pressure is weakened by indications that the "Sunshine Fund" story has not been dropped. As a result of Loetterle's work, the city's Department of Investigation is examining the fund, and the *News* has put investigative reporter William Sherman onto the controversy. (Sherman is waiting for the city's investigative unit to release the records pertaining to the fund.) *Times* reporter Ralph Blumenthal is also looking into the fund; thus far he has been unable to find anything "nefarious."

Nevertheless, the *News* unit of The Newspaper Guild is bringing Loetterle's case to arbitration. And meanwhile, a coalition of environmental and consumer groups has appealed to *News* executive editor Floyd Barger to return Loetterle to his beat. "In an area where there is a dearth of informed investigators," they wrote in part, "where editors generally can assign only superficially acquainted reporters to press conferences and hearings, when sophisticated understanding... is actually needed, Fred has demonstrated rare competence and inquisitiveness." —T.P.

New York Post

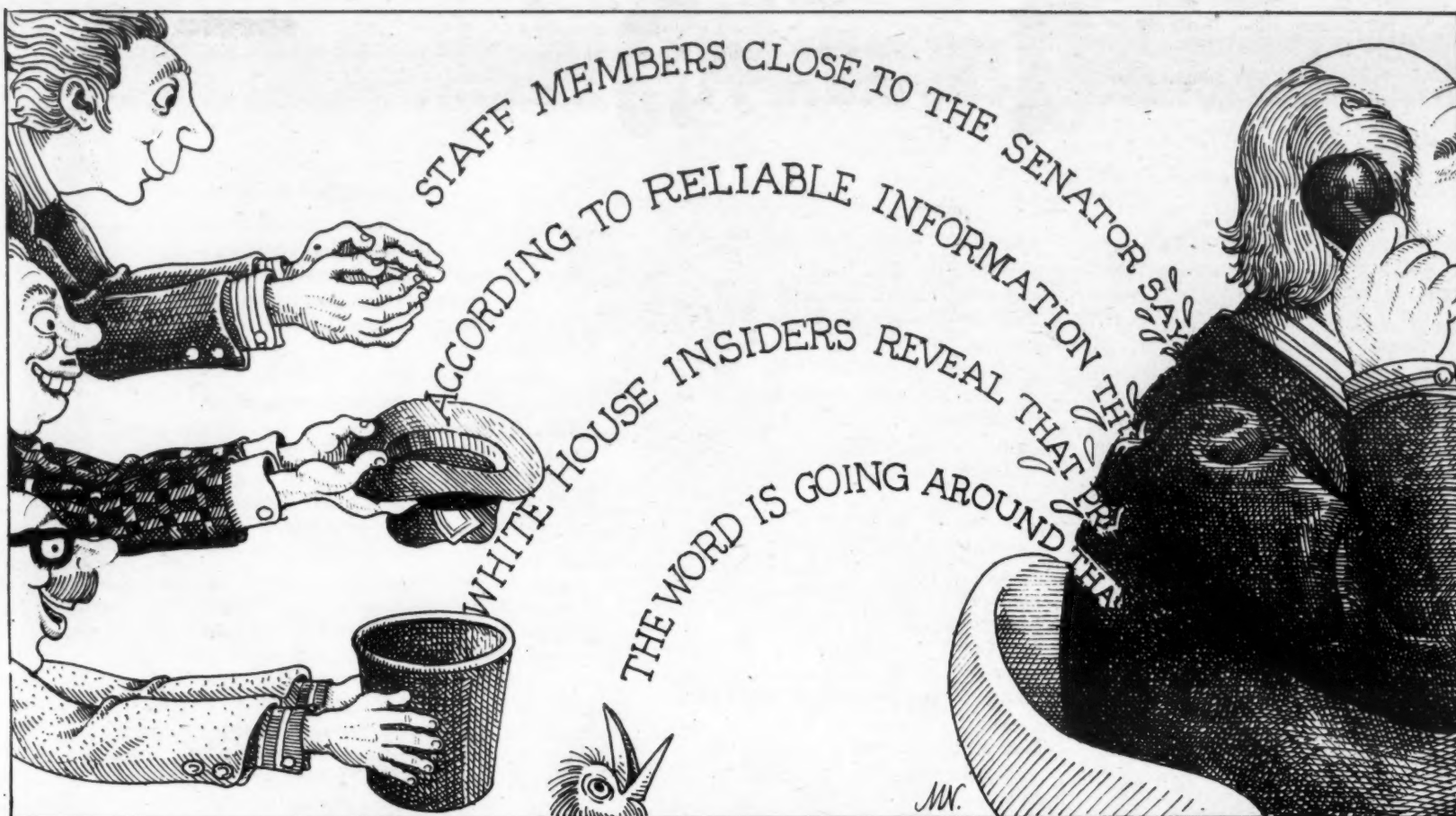
Amsterdam News

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letter (the Xerox machine had not yet been invented) and sent it to a friend of mine who worked for the Senate Committee on Government Operations. I told him he could use my name, since I was about to leave the government anyway. The chief counsel to the committee happened to be Robert F. Kennedy. He passed the letter to his friend Charles Bartlett of the *Chattanooga Times*, who broke the story. Talbot resigned. Bartlett won a Pulitzer Prize. I started getting phone calls from reporters asking if I "had anything else." I was on my way.

On a normal news day I get four or five calls from reporters looking for information. In the usual week, I assist in the development of two political stories, and as many columns. The columns are easier, because they involve simply analysis and speculation, which I can do in my sleep. I once gave Stewart Alsop the same column, about the same political figure, that I had given him six years before—and then sent him copies of both his columns, just to make him mad. As a Democrat, I find it easier to operate with my party out of power. It gives me more freedom, as well as the means to try to stop Administration proposals I consider wicked. Actually, since I had little use for Lyndon Johnson (or him for me), I consider that I have been out of power—and free to leak what I please—for the last ten years.

This hobby of mine involves risks, of course. If the word ever gets around that I talk, politicians will stop talking to me. And reporters will erase my phone number in their books. That's why I make it a rule never to reveal a confidence unless I know it has been told to at least three other people besides myself. And rather than give out a story directly, I prefer to tell a reporter where he can find it. That way, the story can never be traced back to me. In fact, some of the most fun I have is talking to reporters about how to find a bit of scandal I know is there. We go through a list of contributors to the Committee to Re-elect the President. This money man sounds suspiciously like the owner of a Miami television station. Why not check to see if his license is up for renewal, I suggest. (I know damn well it is—my firm's Miami branch does the accounting for the station.) Or

check into why a certain Republican state chairman has been telling people he now prefers Rockefeller to Connally for 1976. Could it be that the Chase Manhattan Bank has just made a large deposit in the bank in which the state chairman has stock? (We audit the bank.)

After almost two decades of this, I know all the techniques reporters use. The way they play one source against another. The way they "confront" a politician or government official with uncorroborated details of a story, hoping to get additional information and corroboration from him. And especially the way they make up quotes themselves and attribute them to "friends of Senator X" or "sources close to the investigation." This last is often harmless. A reporter wants to cap his story with a quote that summarizes a situation. So he rephrases something a real source has said, in more colorful or cogent language. Sometimes, though, the practice can be pretty funny. Like the time Nixon visited the Philippines in 1955 and rode through the streets of Manila. "Said one Filipino," reported *Time*, "There goes the symbol of American friendship and resistance to Communist aggression."

Some people play the source game to enhance their own reputation. Just before the 1970 congressional elections, Sen. Edmund Muskie was preparing a speech on behalf of the Democrats to be delivered on television election eve. The Muskie camp got word that The Associated Press had learned the speech had been drafted by Richard Goodwin, the former Kennedy and Johnson speechwriter. This happened to be true. But it upset Muskie and his staff, who were not eager to share the credit. Goodwin said he would personally check out the source of the rumor. He then called several national columnists and political reporters and said something like the following: "This is Dick Goodwin. I'm in Portland . . . yes, I've been talking to Senator Muskie . . . I think the speech is very good . . . but how did you learn who was writing it?" These calls completed, Goodwin reported back to Muskie and said: "Senator, I have investigated these

rumors thoroughly and there is absolutely no basis to think they are coming from here."

As a source for Washington reporters, I am not exactly typical. I guess reporters get most of their information from people who have a vested interest in getting certain facts into the papers. Most Congressional assistants, for example, feed the press information that makes their bosses look good. Then there are the civil servants who feel their special programs are being undermined by stupid policies, or warped by politics. They leak information out of loyalty to their agency, in the hope that the publicity will change policies they think are mistaken. Sometimes they team up to nail their boss. That's what happened to L. Patrick Gray, the acting head of the FBI. As I understand it, a group of FBI officials who were loyal to J. Edgar Hoover's way of doing things were appalled by Gray's mediocrity and his subservience to the White House. For the "good of the Bureau" to which they had devoted their lives, they arranged to leak documents to a former FBI official, who in turn fed them to the press. How else do you think reporters learned that Gray had refused to let the FBI interview Martha Mitchell, or had paid out \$100,000 for private airplane transportation because he was afraid if he took a commercial flight he might be hijacked? Such bureaucratic sources are much more reliable than the Congressional flacks, but they still have a vested interest—in protecting an ideal, or a program, or in simply screwing somebody. But me—I'm the most reliable kind of source there is, because I just do it for fun.

My hobby has become riskier in recent years, and I have to take precautions. Every month, I have my telephone checked and my office swept for eavesdropping devices. When a reporter calls me whom I don't know, I insist on talking to him face-to-face. I meet him in a bar, checking the olive in his martini to make sure it has no microphone. Or I take him into the bathroom to talk. A source has to protect himself these days. Telephone taps and bugging devices are everywhere. A whole industry has grown up in Washington that does nothing but search out news leaks. "Security experts" like Harold Hunt are hired to make sure secrets don't

leak. That's called "defensive security." They end up bugging the opposition. That's called "offensive security."

For anybody who thinks, as I do, that the kicks are worth the risks, and wants to become a reliable source, I offer this advice:

- Tell the truth. If you trim it or twist it, or worse yet send a reporter up a blind alley, you're dead.

- Know to whom you're speaking. Beware the reporter who calls you out of the blue. He may be from the Committee to Re-elect the President. During the 1970 election campaign, I got a call at two in the morning from "Bob Morse, the night man at the AP." He asked what I knew about a deal between a Senator up for re-election and a member of the Mafia. Fortunately, I keep two telephones in my bedroom. On the pretext of looking up a document, I called the AP newsroom on the other phone and asked for Morse. Of course he didn't exist. So I told "Morse" to give me his number and I would call him back. He said he was having a sudden attack of the runs, got off the phone in a hurry and never called back.

- Don't blow your cover. Its all right if reporters know you are a leak. They know how to protect their sources. But don't let your fellow insiders find out. My most frequent nightmare goes like this: I am sitting in the hotel suite of a leading candidate for the Presidential nomination, having breakfast with him and his top staff. *The New York Times* that morning has run a damaging article on his prospects, guaranteed to drive off all the big contributors. It has quotes like this: "Said one senior staff advisor: 'This campaign is in deep trouble. If we don't come in second in the Florida primary, we're finished—and as of today, we're fifth.'" The candidate tries to control his rage. "O.K.," he says slowly, "who's the son of a bitch?" All eyes turn toward me.

At the risk of talking myself out of my favorite position, I would venture that the whole idea of reliable sources has been debased—not by the sources, but by the journalists. Until forty years ago, a President would not allow himself to be quoted, directly or indirectly. Reporters had to say "we have learned on the highest authority that..." That's how it started, but today hosts of sources spread interesting but inconsequential gossip, and the device is used to lend authenticity to ideas created by the reporter himself.

There are only two types of stories where masking the source produces significant news. The first is the corruption story. The source, because he is dealing with another person's reputation and often his freedom, runs a real risk in exposing himself. He must be protected. The second is the story about an important development in military security or high diplomacy such as the report of the Bay of Pigs invasion the *Times* had and suppressed in 1961; or the proposed increase in the Vietnam troop ceiling to 700,000 at the time of Tet in 1968. Here, premature publicity is the only weapon available to those inside the government who feel the policies are wrong, and they should not have to risk their jobs to use it.

But for the vast majority of government appointments and policy decisions, the opposition can mobilize just as effectively after the official announcement is made. What difference does it make if the public learns a few weeks early that Nixon intends to name some incompetent segregationist to the Supreme Court, or phase out the federal free milk program for starving babies? Bad appointments must still get through the Senate. Good programs can always be reconstituted by the Congress. And there is plenty of time to do these things after an Administration has made its move. If

source identification were required in such stories, "scoops" may get fewer and newsstand sales might slump a little. But an Administration could formulate its recommendations in an orderly way, safe from premature leaks; and the public would not be disserved.

When a source is used simply to verify or interpret a story, there is no need for even anonymous attribution. Reporters tell me they like to "triangulate" a lead—bounce it off an expert in the field, or an agency with a different point of view, to deepen its significance or check its accuracy. This is fine, but they can use the knowledge they get this way without sourcing it. It's time reporters were willing to let their interpretations stand on their own two feet.

In political campaign journalism there are, in my judgment, only two legitimate stories: (1) who wins the nomination and (2) who wins the election. The voters write these stories. The role of the press is to help them by telling them what the candidates are like, what they stand for, who owns them and what the real issues are between them. In almost all campaigns, these stories are buried under an avalanche of trivia. Like the candidate's fund-raising problems, or how his organization is screwing up, or how he plans to woo some political leader (who couldn't deliver the vote of his own family). All this garbage, carefully sourced, comes down on us because of the insatiable desire on the part of political journalists, months before an election, to report who is ahead. So you have the candidate, scooped in the timing of his announcement, plagued by leaks, unable to meet with his supporters, his campaign disrupted and distorted by reporters playing the sources game. The poor man gets so he is afraid to pick up the paper in the morning and ends up trusting no one.

For example, early last year, Senator Muskie was engaged in the "endorsement strategy"—the carefully-timed dropping of big-name endorsements by political leaders: Gov. John Gilligan and Sens. John Tunney, Harold Hughes, etc., in this instance. Part of Muskie's deal with these pols was that news of their support would be held until each could individually drape his arm around Muskie at a news con— Yet leaks of each of these endorsements appeared in *The New York Times*, sometimes within hours after the deals were made. Furious, Muskie's campaign manager, Berl Bernard, called a meeting of the senator's top staff and chewed them out for the leaks. One by one, he made them stand up and swear they would stop talking to reporters. Two days after this so-called "Silence Meeting," the *Times* broke the story that Governor Schapp of Pennsylvania had decided to endorse Muskie.

Well, you may say, politicians asked for it by going into public life. But I'm not just thinking of them. I'm thinking of the reader, who has to put up with all this political garbage for months and months, until his eyes are sore. Just as all judges ought to spend some time in jail to see what it's like, every political reporter and columnist should be forced at gunpoint to read his clips for the past year, to see what farina he turned out in the form of predictions and reliably-sourced gossip. If it weren't for the fact that readers quickly forget, most political reporters would be fired.

Reporters should stick to writing the news instead of trying to be fortunetellers and gossip-mongers. Editors should demand that all sources be identified, except where it is critical that they not be. People like me would clam up immediately. Much of the trivializing would end. Candidates would be spared ulcers and the public would still get all the news it needs (more probably) to cast an intelligent vote.

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Question: Is the President intervening in any way on the Wounded Knee crisis?

Ron Ziegler, the President's press secretary: That matter is being commented on at the Justice Department and I have no comment on it from here.

Q: Ron, I called the Justice Department and they won't have any comment either.

Ziegler: Well, call again.

—White House briefing, March 8.

Q: Ron, did you misspeak when you said Mr. Ehrlichman misspoke earlier this week?

Ziegler: We have stated the position on the whole question which you refer to, and you heard it from John's own words, so draw your own conclusion.

Q: That is just *ipse dixit*, though, isn't it?

Ziegler: Are there any other questions?

—White House briefing, March 9.

Q: Ron, the last time the President was up here [Camp David] he was reported to have been seen strolling around in a pair of purple flared trousers. I am wondering if you can confirm that he owns such a pair of trousers.

Ziegler: He wears sports clothes up here from time to time. I think "flared" is a little exaggerated. Some of his slacks don't have cuffs on them, like some of yours don't.

Q: How about purple?

Ziegler: He is a regular guy [laughter]. He wears sports clothes around here.

Q: Does he have a purple pair?

Ziegler: I have not noticed a purple pair. I have noticed blue and other colors, maroon, et cetera.

—White House briefing, December 7.

Q: Are we in direct contact, or any kind of contact, with the insurgent groups in Cambodia?

Ziegler: I am going to answer your question by saying not to my knowledge, and I would add to that by saying that we are not.

—White House briefing, April 7.

Q: What is the purpose, Ron, of the Cabinet meeting?

Ziegler: The purpose is to meet with Members of the Cabinet...

—White House briefing, March 18.

The Great Gouamba, 1973

BY NEWTON LAMSON

The gallons of ink spilled in the New York press during Meat Boycott Week (MBW) sent me hunting for my copy of *The Wayward Pressman* and A.J. Liebling's chronicling of the newspapers' coverage of a meatless October week in 1946—the time of the Great Gouamba. Gouamba, an African word Liebling summoned up from his childhood readings of one Paul Du Chaillu, explorer and raconteur, literally means, "I am sick of food; I have a craving for meat; I care for nothing else."

In 1946, the country's alimentary canal was pinched at the supply end. The "shortage"—Liebling concluded it had been a hoax—arose when cattlemen withheld their herds from slaughter as a protest against the Truman administration's price ceilings. This time around, of course, the short rations were self-imposed. But in both cases the press recognized an authentic everyman-story and played it for every line of eight-point it could.

Of the two situations, I think Liebling's was the more fertile—gouamba-maddened poachers and rustlers, meat-hungry border dwellers slipping into Canada for a Saskatchewan sirloin, and the cattle baron, sitting tall in the saddle, coolly waiting for the country to come to terms. This lack of romance was not, however, to impede MBW coverage this April in any way. MBW was a "major" story and newspaper buffs were in for a real hosing—tedious, repetitive main stories that all read the same after the first couple of days, backed up by the full sidebar treatment and its attendant absurdities. The point of the boycott was to drive down the price of meat, and a price drop was the only thing that was going to breathe any life into the story after the first few days. Although there was a good deal of journalistic straining toward that end, relatively little effort was expended investigating the market mechanics that might engender a price drop. The natural impulse was to report—and to report at appalling length—on what was immediately visible.

The central figure of this drama, as reviewed by the New York Press, became the virtuous homemaker, who—when not being interviewed—was pictured gamely resisting the siren call of the meatcounter. Numbered among the supporting players were the irate butcher (usually an independent), the boycott shirker, the sympathetic butcher, the Fulton fishmonger, and a host of anonymous food chain satraps.

The weekend papers previewing MBW were pretty tame. The *Post* on Saturday wrapped its main boycott story in with its coverage of Betty Furness' appointment as the city's Consumer Affairs Commissioner (BETTY'S A BOYCOTT CHEER-LEADER) and doled out a few inches to Bella Abzug, who had promised to go around rattling the cages of butchers in her district. What passed for market analysis appeared in the financial pages in the form of a Bache & Co. commodity report on erratic hog and beef prices—it was reprinted whole cloth and without comment.

In the Sunday *Times*, Paul Montgomery put together a serviceable round-up story in which he quoted butchers predicting a 50 per cent drop in sales, a figure that was to hold up for the entire week. The meatpackers, as personified by Swift & Co., received sympathetic treatment in a piece by

"The central figure in the Meat Boycott Week drama was the virtuous homemaker, who—when not being interviewed—was pictured gamely resisting the siren call of the meat counter."

Ernest Holsendolph (PACKERS PUT IN THE MIDDLE/CATTLEMEN, HOUSEWIVES BESET SWIFT ON SUPPLIES).

The *Daily News'* Robert Carroll, who was to follow the story for the duration, smelled conspiracy in the air. "Even as meat was getting the cold shoulder because of soaring costs," his second graph on Sunday began, "there were scattered indications that New York area retailers were trying to keep dollar volumes up by raising the prices of chicken, fish and other meat substitutes." This was backed up in the next paragraph with references to "spot checks" on chicken prices and a \$2.49 Queens flounder. The headline writer had the good sense to ignore the innuendo (CITY SETS ITS TABLE WITH BOYCUTLETS), and the layout editor apparently wasn't buying any either, playing it on page three below a *News* natural entitled TAMER SAVES CLOWN IN FALL INTO LION CAGE. Page one was given over to Ken Norton's mistreatment of Muhammad Ali.

The stories in Monday morning's papers were, of course, written Sunday night when returns were meager. In his lead in the *Times*, Montgomery quoted boycott leaders as saying that things were off to a good start, but he shot that down in his second paragraph by pointing out that most meat markets were closed on Sunday. He was in the position of election night reporters trying to get a trend out of the New Hampshire vote, and, for Montgomery, New Hampshire was a handful of Kosher markets on the Lower East Side. The one bright spot in Monday's *Times* was supplied by John Darnton, who interviewed a butcher named Braunschweiger.

The *News*, which announced the boycott on page one, had a leg up on the *Times* in the early returns department—it knew that supermarkets in New Jersey were open on Sunday. Peter Coutros weighed in with the first of four flamboyant sidebars. In the curtain-raiser (A PASTA DINNER SHOWS TRUE GRISTLE), Coutros looked over the shoulder of a Queens housewife as she prepared a meatless Sunday dinner, giving "... the proverbial back of her hand to the porky price of beef."

On Monday night the *Post* got into the act in a big way with a front page story (STORES ARE

HIT HARD BY MEAT BOYCOTT) assembled by no less than seven people. The *Post* team had the first honest returns, and the 50 per cent drop in sales predicted in Montgomery's Sunday story was being upheld. Joseph Berger *et al.* of the *Post* also offered, straight-faced, the quote of the day from a supermarket executive: "The consumer movement has gotten to the people."

By Tuesday things were starting to heat up. The *Times* (unbylined) marched itself right out to the end of a limb by announcing, MEAT SALES DROP 80% IN PLACES AS BOYCOTT BEGINS. The 80 per cent figure was based on hard-core pockets of resistance in middle-income and wealthy communities—journalists' purviews frequented apparently only by *Timesmen*. The *News* and *Post* both stuck to their 50 per cent guns.

The *Times* closed its story with a quote by Clarence G. Ademy, president of the National Association of Food Chains, who endeared himself to boycotters by offering a bit of perspective. "I don't think the boycott activity... amounts to a mammary gland on a mudworm!"

On Tuesday the *Post* and the *News* both went after the eating habits of New York's high-rollers, and the result was a journalistic standoff. The *News*, flaunting its working class bias, went for the fat cats' jugular with THE FANCY DINERS GO THEIR OWN EXPENSIVE WAY. Marcia Kramer wrote in her lead that it was easy to get a seat at McDonald's, but "21" was filled to the rafters with obdurate carnivores, whose "uniformed chauffeurs jockeyed for limousine curb space." The other places "fancy" diners could be seen appeasing their gouamba were the Palm and Pen and Pencil—unfair choices, I thought, since both specialize in meat dishes. Judith Michaelson, writing in the *Post*, found that "elite" diners at roadhouses like La Caravelle and La Côte Basque were, despite the *News*, shying away from meat dishes.

By Wednesday the strain was starting to tell. The only thing that was going to keep the story alive (at least in terms of reader interest) was a price break. The *Post* came up with one, but it was pretty anemic—International Supermarkets (seven area stores) announced that it would start selling one- and two-day-old meat for less than it charges for fresh cuts. The *News* led on 20 per cent of the wholesale meat industry workers being laid off or forced to take vacations while the *Times* contented itself with a low-key report indicating that sales were way off but prices remained firm.

For the morning papers, Thursday was more of the same. The *Times* used the end-of-the-week food ads as a news peg, and Robert Carroll at the *News* (AS BULL-HEADED AS EVER, MEAT PRICES HOLD STEADY) tried to simulate motion away from dead center by writing, "Consumer enthusiasm for the meat boycott appeared on the rise..." Evidence of the putative rise, however, was not offered, and my initial misgivings were vindicated a few paragraphs further along where I learned that protest leaders were split on extending the boycott into the following week because some doubted if shoppers would continue to respond.

Peter Coutros saved the day for the *News* by interviewing Herman Kahn—no, not Herman-on-the-Hudson, but Herman-on-Lenox-Ave., an uptown butcher (BOYCOTT NO SACRED COW—ONE BUTCHER CAN HACK IT).

On Thursday afternoon the *Post* had another price-break story (page one off-lead—BIG

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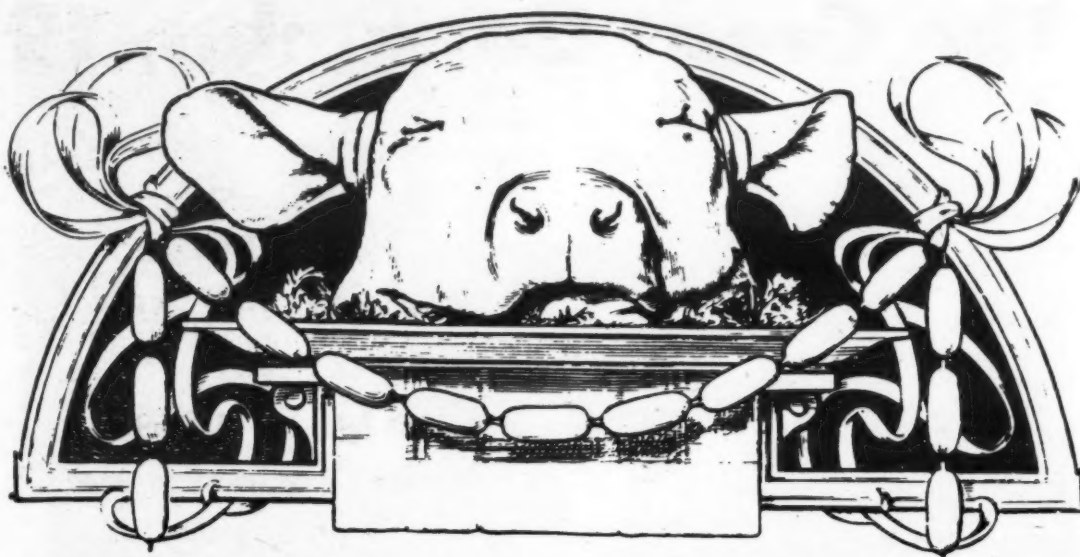
CHAIN YIELDS, CUTS COST OF MEAT), but it didn't mean much more to the housewife than those one- and two-day-old cuts International Supermarkets were trying to peddle on Wednesday. Grand Union, the second largest chain in the metropolitan area, said it was cutting all meat prices by at least 10¢ a pound below the President's ceiling. To their credit, after thus arousing our gouamba, reporters Joseph Berger and Dick Belsky pointed out that some items could conceivably stay the same price or even edge higher because the ceiling levels (which would be different for every store) were to be calculated on maximum prices in March.

In Friday's *News* Carroll echoed Berger's and Belsky's caveat and went them one better by quoting industry sources (executives of rival chains?) that Grand Union's prices were higher than anyone else's to begin with. Writing in the *Times*, Lawrence Van Gelder ignored both these raffine-ments (the oversight was, however, corrected on Saturday by Robert D. McFadden), but he did have an item that neither the *Post* nor *News* had on Friday or Saturday. Big G Discount Food Stores, operating 25 stores in Southern New England, had said it was cutting back as much as 40 cents a pound on more than 100 meat items. I think amplification of the "as much as 40 cents a pound" part would have been helpful, but, quibbling aside, this is the type of price break that everyone had been looking for—even if it did occur outside the metropolitan area. Why did it happen in that one chain? For how long? Which items? There are 100 other questions I'd rather have seen answered, but instead I got to read another roundup piece full of one-paragraph updates and snippets about Betty Furness and Herman Badillo.

The Friday *Post* homed in on wholesalers cutting prices of beef and pork by four to six cents, but—in what Liebling called marched-up-the-hill-then-marched-down-again journalism—we learned in the fourth paragraph that the decline "was only temporary and that prices could rebound again late next week if shopper demand picked up again," i.e., if the boycott ended.

Thursday's and Friday's coverage rather convincingly underlined the futility of the entire exercise. By then I thought it apparent that examining the fate of meat prices by talking with housewives, butchers and public figures is not unlike covering a power shortage by interviewing light-bulbs. If anything had happened or was going to happen, it would have been somewhere back up the line.

The place to have started, it seems to me, was with the meat prices which spurred on the



boycotters. Why were they that high? The butchers said they were just passing on wholesaler increases, and the wholesalers blamed the packers, who, in turn, put the ball in the cattleman's court. If the economics of meat price increases were really cost-push all along the line, wouldn't it have been nice to have seen a bucket-of-feed-to-meat-counter cost analysis of a pound of flesh a year ago vs. now? And if it wasn't cost-push, then somebody's out there gouging, and you've got the type of story that used to sell newspapers.

Then, with information in hand about what was behind the high prices, we could get into the business of predicting if the boycott would reduce retail prices—which, despite a good deal of post-boycott bravura about how the goal of MBW was to "show unity" and throw a scare into the cattle barons, was the purpose avowed by boycotters all during MBW. For openers, couldn't the prices-will-drop balloon have been pricked right at the start? The consumers exerted pressure by not buying, but the cattlemen riposted with reduced slaughtering, knowing full well they could ride out a storm billed in advance to last only a week. What would have been an effective boycott period? How long could cattlemen have held off slaughtering? Would reduced consumption over a long period have, in fact, cut prices, or would economies of scale have been lost, resulting in stable or even increased prices for the smaller herds? And, finally, which of the components of high meat costs were seasonal or caused by special circumstances and were, therefore, likely to fall, boycott or no boycott?

The *Post* approached (inadvertently, I fear)

some of these questions when it ran an AP story—yet another roundup—containing abbreviated interviews with well-known economists (Miegs, Heller, Samuelson). These worthies said, in effect, that the boycott was a very interesting phenomenon, but it would leave no mark on prices. None of their reasoning was proffered, no learned dielectric was run. This was tantamount to giving their opinions equal weight with those of, say, Herman Badillo or Herman the butcher on Lenox Ave.—a very democratic brand of journalism.

The word for coverage on Saturday, the final day of the boycott, is anticlimatic. The headlines pretty much tell the story: MEAT BOYCOTT ENDING; NEW PROTESTS SET (*Post*); BOYCOTTS HOLDING FIRM, BUT SO ARE MEAT PRICES (*Times*); and A STALEMEAT! BOYCOTT PROS AND FOES STANDING FIRM (*News*). The *News*, which revisited Grand Union and found that some prices were indeed 10 cents lower, wrapped the whole affair up in nine punless paragraphs. The *Post* ran about twice as much copy as the *News*, yet managed to say considerably less than it had on any other day that week. McFadden's story in the *Times* was the best of the day—he went into the move to extend the boycott in some detail (but without giving indications of the numerical strength of the groups whose spokesmen he was quoting) and put the lie to Friday's Big G and Grand Union story—"Some consumer advocates, however, termed the reductions an effort to obtain publicity and are 'not worth talking about'." Amen.

April 1-7 was a week that Joe would have loved.

Scotty...

continued from page 1

scoop at the last moment and demanded equal treatment); the documents in the Oppenheimer case; the last public statement (in a letter to Reston) of Josef Stalin; the first interview by Premier Aleksei Kosygin with an American correspondent.

"He is quite simply the greatest reporter of our time," says his longtime friend, Tom Wicker. "He's particularly good at getting men in power to give him interviews, to give him documents, to tell him what happened—or what they think happened." Anyone who has ever seen Reston go after a big story on deadline will never forget it. "One of the most effective telephone men I've ever seen," Arthur Krock once said. "He's a master at extracting information from a guy who doesn't want to talk," says Wicker. "He'll pretend to know more than he does. He'll unload A and B on the hapless

son-of-a-bitch and get him to come across with C."

Wicker, who succeeded Reston as the *Times* Washington bureau chief, concedes that a bureau chief's nightmare goes something like this: a phone call from New York 45 minutes before deadline: the *Akron Beacon-Journal* has a story that Henry Kissinger is meeting with Allende and Castro in a Guatemalan hill resort to carve up the Southern Hemisphere. Get that story.

"What do you do in a crunch like that?" I ask Wicker.

"Call Scotty," he says. "You don't waste that kind of resource. If anybody can get through to the White House and find out what's happening, Scotty can."

Since most of us realized we would never be Scotty Restons, the next best thing was to go to

work for him. So, like eager rookies in spring training, we flashed our skills, hoping to catch his eye. Indeed, Russell Baker recalls: "Reston saw himself then as general manager of the Yankees, a recruiter of talent, a watcher of the farm system. In my early days on the paper he used to call me in and ask 'who's good? who've they got on the Baltimore Sun, the Atlanta Constitution, the Charlotte Observer?'" I remember my awe when Reston reached down and plucked my friend David Halberstam off the *Nashville Tennessean*; and the exaltation eighteen months later when my own call came, Emmet Holloman's slow drawl crooning across the line from Washington: "Mr. Reston would like to see you this week. Would that be convenient?" Would that be convenient!

Destined for almost immediate assignment



Reston in China with Chou En-Lai

to the Congo, I spent only three months in Washington and never became a permanent part of the remarkable bureau Reston was assembling at 17th and K streets. But since he had recruited me, I always considered myself one of "Scotty's Boys." In *The Kingdom and the Power*, Gay Talese has described that "special breed of men, an almost Restonian species: they were lean and tweedy journalists, usually quite tall, educated at better universities, and brighter than they first seemed to be..." An exaggeration perhaps, but we did consider ourselves a special outfit, a kind of Praetorian Guard, and wherever we chanced to meet in later years, at Sardi's or the Caravelle bar, we would ask after each other and then, warmed by a few drinks, quietly reaffirm our pride in being "Scotty's Boys."

Reston has a great capacity to stir allegiance among those who work for him. In part, this is because he never seems to resent others' achievements. Baker recalls that Reston once said of another *Times* editor: "he's scared to be surrounded by good people. I always feel that if I'm surrounded by good people it'll make me look better." Harrison Salisbury remarks on Reston's knack for becoming a father figure to younger men, in much the same way as, years earlier, he had been almost a son to older men like Arthur Krock and Arthur Hays Sulzberger.

The warmth and loyalty which he engendered both below and above—particularly his intimate relationship with the Sulzberger family—sped his rise within the *Times* hierarchy: to bureau chief in 1953; associate editor in 1964; executive editor in 1968; vice president in 1969 and, only last month, to a seat on the board of directors. The *Times* has made him a wealthy man. In 1970, the last year for which published figures are available, he received \$96,395 in salary and fees, \$30,000 in "supplemental remuneration," and had built up "deferred compensation" in stock valued then at \$857,648 (less now, for the price of *Times* stock has slipped sharply). He also owns outright *Times* stock valued last December at nearly \$170,000. He has two offices, one in New York and one in Washington, spacious and impressive enough for *Esquire* to photograph. Although the term makes him uncomfortable, he is certainly, as the *Saturday Review* puts it, "a journalistic statesman who has arrived."

Richly deserved as these rewards may be, they have taken their toll. A Journalistic Statesman does not have much time or energy left for reporting.

At its best, in the 'fifties and early 'sixties, Reston's column was a projection of his reportorial talents. Analysis has never been his strong point, and certainly not philosophy. ("Scotty has journalism's best legs," says Russ Baker. "He's not Aristotle, he's Alexander. He's got to be out striding around the world.") What he did best in those years was to illuminate a situation through high-level reporting. He could get to the "experts" or the actors in a drama, sit down and talk with them, find out how they saw the issues, then write about it in a breezy, colloquial style. "I think I know where the brains are in this town," he once said. "I pick 'em. When I pick enough of them, I can write an analytical piece about whatever the problem is."

But as he had less time—and perhaps inclination—to report, Reston began disparaging "the old-fashioned scoop artist" who liked to play "cops and robbers" with government officials (precisely the rough, rodeo act in which he won his own golden spurs). He scorned "police blotter journalism," the tendency merely to "transfer the reporting habits of the police court and the county court house to the great capitals of the world." Instead, he called for a more "thoughtful" journalism which would explain "what it all means."

Soon, he developed a striking metaphor for this viewpoint: "on the surface the waters are ruffled and confused, but deep and powerful tides are running underneath." And, he decided, a columnist's task was to contemplate the tides, not report the waves. In recent years this has become Reston's most persistent theme—the need to get our minds off the day-to-day headlines and concentrate on the sweeping, long-term changes which are transforming our lives. As he put it in 1963:

... we are in trouble because we have not kept up with the needs of the age. Change is the biggest story in the world today, and we are not covering it adequately; change in the size and movement of our people; change in the nature, location and availability of jobs; violent change in the relations between village and town, town and

city, city and state, state and nation, and, of course, change in the relations between the empires that are rising... unless we report these changes, our people will not adapt to them, and every civilization must either adapt or perish.

One can hardly argue with this. But the theme has been repeated so often in Reston's columns over the past decade (one friend suggests it is his "slow day column"), that I wondered where it came from. So, during a long interview in the study of his Washington home this winter, I asked him. He walked across the room to his cluttered desk where he picked up a well-thumbed copy of *The Essential Lippmann* and proceeded to read this passage from *Drift and Mastery*:

We are unsettled to the very roots of our being. There isn't a human relation, whether of parent and child, husband and wife, worker and employer, that doesn't move in a strange situation. We are not used to a complicated civilization. We don't know how to behave when personal contact and eternal authority have disappeared. There are no precedents to guide us, no wisdom that wasn't made for a simpler age. We have changed out environment more quickly than we know how to change ourselves.

Reston balanced the graceful sentences like crystal goblets which might shatter in a moment's carelessness. For he holds Lippmann in respect bordering on awe. They have known each other for years, many of them as neighbors when Lippmann occupied the former deanery of Washington Cathedral a few blocks down Woodley road from Reston's place. In 1959, Lippmann's seventieth year, Reston and Marquis Childs edited a volume of appreciation in which Reston marveled at the stately grandeur of Lippmann's career: "half in the noisy pit and half in the quiet study, a duality of engagement in the world of public affairs and disengagement from the world of affairs into the world of books and political philosophy, of reason and meditation on ultimate values."

During my interview with him, Reston emphatically denied that Lippmann was his journalistic model. "He's a beautifully educated man and I'm not well-educated at all. He's a very orderly man. I'm terribly sloppy. He imposed his private life on the news. I'm tied to the ticker. I've never thought of myself as another Lippmann."

Yet others have made the comparison. In a 1961 article on Washington columnists, *Newsweek* noted that President Kennedy "concentrates most intently upon a trio of sages": Lippmann, Joe Alsop and Reston. Later, John K. Jessup wrote in *Life*: "Lippmann, the born mandarin, can be said to have brought philosophy down from its mountain to the sweaty forum of public events; whereas Reston, moving in the opposite direction, has elevated cityroom journalism into political and social criticism of a high order." And, when Lippmann retired as a newspaper columnist in 1967, speculation on who would inherit his mantle as pundit-in-chief focused most frequently on Joe Kraft and Reston.

"That kind of talk couldn't help but affect Scotty," says one *Times* editor. "Almost despite himself, he wants to be Lippmann's successor." In any case, Reston continued to drift steadily away from reporting in his columns and toward the "political philosophy" and "meditation on ultimate values" he had once detected in Lippmann.

This tide reached its high water mark in 1968-9 when the Sulzbergers prevailed on him to take over as executive editor, partly to run both the Daily and Sunday news departments but primarily to resolve a fierce power struggle underway in New

York. Though a step up for Reston the Institutional Figure, the new job was something of a disaster for Reston the Journalist. It meant leaving Washington, the city which had nourished his creative energies for nearly three decades ("I can no more imagine Reston leaving Washington than the Pope leaving Rome," Bob Donovan of *The Los Angeles Times* remarked on hearing the news).

New York fascinated him, but he never felt at home there. He could still interview his Washington sources on the phone, of course, but somehow he seemed to do less and less even of that. Linda Greenhouse, his news clerk that year, recalls that "writing the column seemed to be a terrible chore for him during that period. He had all these mandatory meetings from which he would have to wrench himself away, lock himself up in a room and write under great pressure." And the columns showed it—lofty, above the fray, moralistic, and often downright banal. Since his return to Washington in 1969, they have regained a bit of their lost concreteness; but they still ring with empty, windy sentences like these:

- "The discontent that is shaking the world cannot be dealt with by politics alone or at the periphery of public life but must get closer to the central and intimate places of personal life and moral conduct." (June 6, 1971)

- "You cannot go across America these days without realizing that the nation is in the midst of another vast physical transformation, and without wondering where all this is leading." (March 22, 1973)

- "The more the American people get, the more they seem to grumble about what they don't get, but at least this Thanksgiving even most professional grumblers would probably admit that the world is now in better shape than it was a year ago." (November 22, 1972)

Every once in a while—notably on his trip to China last year—he plunges anew into real reporting and we get flashes of the old Reston: his famous five-hour interview with Chou En-lai ("Please don't eat the lotus leaves," Mr. Chou said") and the lively account of his own appendectomy at the Anti-Imperialist Hospital in Peking ("Doctor Li lit two pieces of an herb called ai, which looked like the burning stumps of a broken cheap cigar, and held them close to my abdomen while occasionally twirling the needles into action").

Savoring dispatches like those, one wonders whether the crest of a great reporter's career ought necessarily to be a column. It wasn't always so. Adolph Ochs, the *Times*' founder, abhorred opinion in his paper and the *Times* didn't have a political column until Arthur Krock snagged his in 1933 (joining a relatively small corps of capital columnists headed by Lippmann and David Lawrence). But today, a hard-driving, scoop-scoring political reporter sees a column as his only just reward.

But why? Each morning, on editorial and op-ed pages across the country, Alsop and Kraft, White and Fritchey, Bartlett and Phillips, Wills and Thimmesch, Evans and Novak, Buckley and Kilpatrick masticate the same tasteless bit of Washington gristle chewed over by their colleagues yesterday and the day before. Most of them write as if their world were bounded by 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Capitol Hill, Foggy Bottom and Langley, Va., seemingly unaware that something may also be afoot at the Federal Trade Commission or the Bureau of Indian Affairs, much less in overcrowded prisons, understaffed hospitals or crumbling neigh-

borhoods across the land. Even those columnists with broader horizons—notably Tom Wicker and Tony Lewis—often seem wasted in their 700-word grooves. Should the ultimate product of exceptional talent like theirs be impassioned screeds into whose margins we scrawl "how true!"? Reston once wrote: "News is more powerful than opinion." In a year whose most significant journalism was produced by two Washington police reporters it is difficult not to agree.

But there is a deeper paradox in Reston's career: his very triumphs as an institutional figure may have contributed heavily to his obsolescence as a columnist. For beyond reporting, Reston's major assets as a columnist were bright writing, access to expertise, and a feel for "the inside story." Yet these are the very qualities which Reston has so vigorously sought to inject in the *Times*' general news coverage over the past 20 years.

Twenty years ago, Reston's lively, informal writing stood out from the soggy swamp of *Times* verbiage. For he brought to political coverage the brisk, droll style he had developed as a sportswriter on the *Springfield (Ohio) Daily News* and with The Associated Press (the sports pages then being the only part of a newspaper free enough from the textbook formulas so a writer could develop a distinctive style). Reston's outright forays into humor, including Uniquack, largely ceased in 1962 when Baker began his satirical column across the way ("Why have a bush leaguer do it when you have a pro on the page?" Reston explains). And, since then, better writing has pervaded so much of the paper that Reston's own style no longer seems anything special.

Likewise with expertise. In the 'fifties, Reston had an unparalleled ability to "get to the man who knows." But he was also among the first

to recognize that the age of specialization required a new specialization among reporters. Thus, he hired men like Ed Dale and Dick Mooney to report economics; John Finney on science; Jack Raymond on military affairs, and so on. Today, there is very little expertise in Reston's column one cannot read more fully elsewhere in the paper.

All too often in the 'fifties, the "inside story" was told only around the bar after work because reporters couldn't find a way to get it in the paper. Russ Baker recalls "as a reporter, I often felt I couldn't tell the reader all I knew about a story. You had to channel your information between those bare column rules with all the conventions of sourcing and 'objectivity.' So Scotty was invaluable. While we had to write 'Joe McCarthy charged...' Ike replied..., you could flip over to Scotty and get it all in perspective." Reston wrote the bar talk.

But, partly as a result of his efforts, the *Times* has loosened up considerably. More interpretation is allowed in news stories. The "news analysis" column is available to reporters on complex stories. Very rarely these days does one get an "inside story" from Reston that doesn't appear elsewhere in the paper first.

"There was a time when the political column was important to American journalism," says one Washington reporter. "But journalism is so much more subjective now, a reader soaks up so much more of what a reporter knows, that there isn't much role left for the columnist any more. To make a column compelling now you need strong whiskey; spritzer isn't good enough."

And that is part of the problem, for Reston often goes down like Gatorade these days, a pastel shading of opinion so carefully hedged that one isn't sure just what he thinks. His columns on Watergate, for example, have been models of circumspection—

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particularly toward the President himself. As late as March 24, he was treating the whole matter as a relatively minor aberration ("politicians have a way of doing fairly well on major questions and then stumbling into trouble over secondary issues."). On April 19, after the case had broken wide open, he was still ready to assume the President's own innocence ("He is too intelligent to approve such risks in an election against George McGovern which was never in doubt. Also, in fairness to him, he is too smart to get involved in raising funds laundered through Mexico, or recruiting C.I.A. characters to bug Larry O'Brien's telephones").

Or, if he takes a strong position one day, he takes an equally strong position on the other side several days later. In November, he praised the President for being "more generous, more composed and more serene" than ever before. In early February, he denounced him for "an insensitivity to people in trouble, if not an actual strain of cruelty."

In part this reflects an understanding of the complexity of human affairs. "Having raised a family," he told me, "I know that most readers live in ambiguity. Yet somehow when they read a columnist they don't want ambiguity. They want you to be either Bill Buckley or Tony Lewis." In part, it comes out of a strong sense of fairness and balance: if you knock 'em down one day, pick 'em up and brush 'em off the next.

But it also stems from the *ad hoc*, improvised nature of his judgments. "It would be flattery to suggest that I have a clear, simple, coherent philosophy," he said in our interview. "I don't." (One friend compares Reston's method to the technique in calculus for locating a point on the arc of a circle. "He hits first on this side, then on that side, thus gradually defining the boundaries of a point without ever really establishing it.").

Linda Greenhouse, now a *Times* reporter, thinks it comes from an acute awareness that he is read by powerful men. "He takes that responsibility very seriously. He thinks the best way to get politicians to listen to him is to appeal to their better nature. He thinks they'll respond to sweet reason whereas castigation would only turn them off." And inevitably he must protect the many powerful readers who are also his sources. Some years ago, John Kenneth Galbraith, reviewing a Reston book, wrote, "over the years he has learned to treat all people in the manner of a newspaperman who must one day go back and see them again... he should now indulge himself more often in the added pleasure of plain and candid and categorical speech."

But perhaps it is just not in his nature. One member of the Washington bureau says "there's something in Reston that makes him instinctively go for the middle ground. It's the instinct of the politician who just naturally gravitates to the center where the power and the influence and the money lie. He doesn't calculate it. It's in his glands."

In our interview, I asked Reston what he considered the keynote of his reporting over the years and he replied unhesitatingly: "profound skepticism of power." But others do not see it that way. Russell Baker says "Scotty may be skeptical about the men who wield power, but he's very respectful of power." And another longtime bureau member says, "I don't think he's skeptical either of government or of men in government—except in their role as politicians, and that largely in a Mr. Dooley way."

One Washington reporter says: "Reston is the classic example of the journalist who tacitly accepts that his mission is to convey what the great

men think. He doesn't put his own intellectual perceptions forward. The materials he deals with are the perceptions of other men."

Reston's skepticism seems most restrained when dealing with foreign affairs. And perhaps he trusts sources as he does because foreign affairs was his first political beat and has been his main focus of interest ever since.

His views on the relations between press and government in foreign policy were outlined in his 1966 lectures to the Council on Foreign Relations, later published as *The Artillery of the Press*. The title derived from Reston's statement that "the rising power of the United States in world affairs, and particularly of the American President, requires not a more compliant press, but a relentless barrage of facts and criticism, as noisy but also as accurate as artillery fire." But, as he spelled out his view, the press corps' guns seemed strangely muffled.

Reston pinned his hopes for an enlightened foreign policy on a "remnant" of wise and intelligent citizens, "an expanding minority" composed of "the best elements in the press, in networks and government, in the schools, colleges, universities and the church, in business, commerce and finance." Thus, he felt, "the responsible government official and the responsible reporter in the field of foreign affairs are not really in conflict ninety per cent of the time. When they do their best work, they are allies with one another and with 'the remnant' in the nation that wants to face, rather than evade, reality."

The consequence of an alliance between government and press can be found in Reston's own successful efforts to tone down the *Times*' 1961 story about the imminent Bay of Pigs invasion. Likewise, Reston knew that the United States was flying high-altitude reconnaissance planes over the Soviet Union but suppressed the fact for more than a year until one of the planes was shot down in 1960. And David Wise's new book, "The Politics of Lying," says the *Times* Washington bureau, while headed by Reston in 1961, killed a story about the secret training of Tibetan guerillas in the Colorado Rockies after the Secretary of Defense's office called to say it would violate "national security." Reston does not recall the incident; but he is on record as saying that "the old principle of publish-and-be-damned, while very romantic, bold and hairy, can often damage the national interest." (Reston favored publication of the Pentagon Papers which, he argued, were mostly history and therefore could not damage the national interest).

Such an alliance may have seemed defensible in the midst of the Cold War. But it was a strange argument for Reston to advance in 1966 at the peak of the Vietnam agony.

"Scotty's form of reporting presupposes that you are dealing with an honorable entity," says one editor. "But as government became less honorable in the 'sixties, as the Vietnam war led Presidents and Secretaries of State to lie systematically not only to the press but to themselves, Reston's reliance on government sources no longer worked very well. His instinct was always to give them the benefit of the doubt, and he got taken."

Perhaps he was right to trust William Fulbright, Mike Mansfield or John Gardner, whom he saw often in Washington. But what of Robert McNamara, William Rogers and Henry Kissinger who also rank among his best sources? When I sat down in his study for my interview, Reston said, "Henry Kissinger sat in that chair just the other night." In an Administration where Kissinger is one of only two reliable sources on foreign affairs, Reston's remarkable access to him is certainly invaluable. But there are those who think he has

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Q: How does the President go about informing himself as to what the members and officials and attorneys of the Re-Election Committee are doing?

Gerald Warren, assistant press secretary: I assume you are talking about the civil suits?

Q: I am talking about everything they are doing. They still have this organization set-up there. When you call them, they say, "Four More Years."

Warren: That is correct and they comment on those things almost daily from the Committee to Re-elect the President. I am not going to comment from here.

Q: How does the President keep himself informed—

Warren: I am not going to comment on these matters from here.

Q: Does the President have a liaison to keep himself informed as to what is going on?

Warren: I hope I am making myself clear and if not I will try one more time. I am not going to comment on the activities of the Committee to Re-Elect the President from here. Ron has set the stand and I am following it.

Q: But, Jerry, those aren't the activities of the committee he is asking about. What he is asking is how the President is keeping himself informed about what is going on.

Warren: I won't quarrel with that. I just have no comment from here.

Q: When they answer that phone "Four More Years," are they talking about his or theirs?

The Press: Thank you, Jerry.

—White House briefing, March 9.

Q: Then, Ron, is it the position of the White House that there was nothing wrong with Mr. Chapin's dealings with Donald Segretti as described by Patrick Gray's statement to the Senate Committee?

Ziegler: Gentlemen, let me make one observation before not answering your questions on the subject. . . .

—White House briefing, March 8.

Q: Was the President aware of Mr. Kalmbach's testimony to the FBI that Dwight Chapin was involved in dispensing a \$30,000 fund to Segretti?

Ziegler: As I said before, I am not going to have any comment today on any aspect of the story that ran beyond what I have said before.

Q: Well, isn't this an open Administration?

A: Yes, it is, and in that context, I stand on what I said.

—White House briefing, March 9.

been used by Kissinger as often as he has used him. Leslie Gelb and Anthony Lake, in their February article in [MORE], concluded that Reston had been misled by Kissinger in Paris last December, resulting in the columnist's overly optimistic page one story saying that the last remaining obstacle to a peace agreement involved the sovereignty of the Saigon government and if that could not be resolved to Thieu's satisfaction, the U.S. would sign without him. Kissinger is apparently going around Washington these days saying that Reston misunderstood him—something Reston very rarely does. Yet, on March 11, we find Reston again in print with a column of inside information—reportedly from Kissinger—about Hanoi's massive violations of the Vietnam peace treaty. There are those in Washington who think he was being used again.

David Halberstam feels Reston stumbled in the 'sixties because he could never bring himself to accept what Vietnam had done to America. "Scotty was pretty good on the war itself," Halberstam says. "I don't think he was ever really fooled and long before a lot of other people, he realized it was going irrevocably wrong. But he wouldn't take what he knew and carry it the whole way. He kept saying 'the war is bad, but America works, the system works'."

Reston does believe the system works; he has his own life before him to prove it. Only last year, he was one of eleven Americans to win the Horatio Alger Award for rising to greatness from humble beginnings. And indeed all the elements of the Great American Success Story are there: born the son of a poor factory worker in Clydebank, Scotland; emigrated to Dayton, Ohio with his family at the age of 11; worked there as a kitchen boy, newspaper deliverer, and caddie; told by his

mother "make something of yourself"; and he did. "I came here as a poor immigrant boy," Reston told me, "and what a marvelous life I've had of it."

And since Reston is a sentimental, romantic, pious man, perhaps it is not surprising that he should regard the System, as he grew up in it, with something approaching reverence.

There is reverence, of course, for God. "... The religious foundation of our common life—no matter how much we divide over creeds and sects and their relation to the state—is not 'forgotten.' We may not believe, but we believe in believing" (April 2, 1969). Raised in a devout Scotch Presbyterian family, encouraged to become a minister, he takes his Calvinism seriously. But not solemnly. Russell Baker recalls standing next to Reston on the night John Kennedy received the Democratic nomination in Los Angeles: "A minister was up there on the podium intoning 'we will beat our spears into pruning hooks' or some gibberish like that, and Reston leans over to me and whispers 'he's got it all fucked up.'"

There is reverence for country, for his adopted land. Sometimes that is expressed in outright patriotism: "The United States went to war today as a great nation should—with simplicity, dignity and unprecedented unity" (January 8, 1941); and sometimes in a remarkable sense of place, rare in a man accustomed to the anonymous marble of official Washington. He is fond of citing a Christopher Morley aphorism: "to be deeply rooted in a place that has meaning is perhaps the best gift a child can have." And Reston is deeply rooted in at least two places, besides Washington, of course—not Clydebank and Dayton, but Fiery Run, Va. and Martha's Vineyard, where he maintains houses and often retires for a quiet Thanksgiving or Christmas

to begin columns with folksy sentences like, "The neighbors down this mountain road are pleased with President Nixon's agreement in Moscow."

There is reverence for the past and reverence for the future. He loves the simple graces of the Nineteenth Century when he can still find them: "The old Currier and Ives America of the Thanksgiving Day prints has not wholly vanished" (November 22, 1959). And he has boundless faith in what is yet to come: "It will be a long time before there is peace and goodwill everywhere in the land, but there is enough of it to keep us going in the right direction" (December 22, 1968), an optimism so persistent and so often flung in the face of facts that one editor has dubbed his columns "the bright side of chaos."

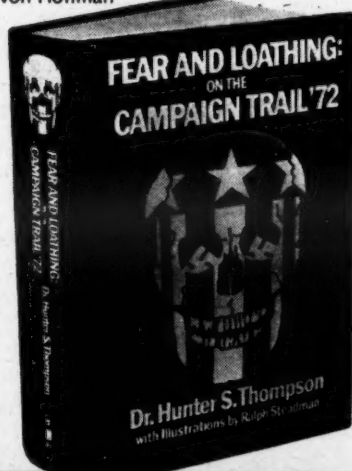
There is reverence for women and the home. Reston has a perennial column about the brave little women behind the powerful men in Washington. "Back of the candidates are their women, with all their love and doubts about their guys, and their anxiety about their children..." (January 16, 1972). In part, this reflects Reston's relentlessly traditional view of the woman's role. Eileen Shanahan, the *Times*' able economics reporter in Washington, recalls Reston's surprise when he walked into the bureau late one Saturday evening some years ago and found her doing her regular turn on the news desk. "You shouldn't have to do that," he said, to which she replied "chivalry has no place on the job." (Shanahan adds that, otherwise, Reston treated her as "a full-fledged bureau member without reservation" and she, unlike some others, feels Reston has become "modernized" on the women's issue). But, in large part, his views on the matter probably reflect his marriage to the former Sally Fulton, who, for 38 years, has devoted her full

"Hunter Thompson is the Prince of Gonzo. He is the quintessential Outlaw Journalist."

—J. Anthony Lukas

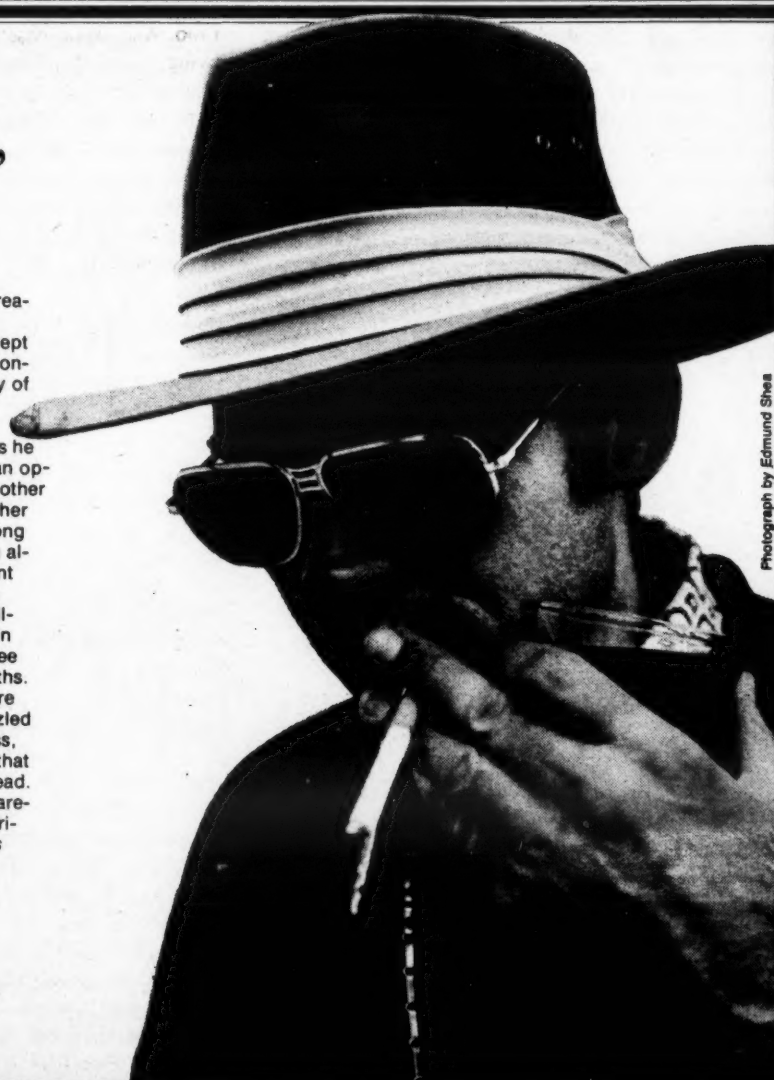
"**Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail 1972** is open to attack from just about any traditional standard of political journalism... it is the kind of book that will probably cause the usual song and dance about the New Journalism, but even that label would sit uncomfortably on so individual a talent. This is a writer: he can make the page come alive, and he sees things for himself... it is the best political reporting in some time—it manages to give politics, after years of televised lobotomy, some flesh."—Joseph Kanon in *Saturday Review*

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"I am worried about the health of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson. He is the most creatively crazy and vulnerable of the New Journalists. ... I do not know him, except from his books, which are brilliant and honorable and valuable. ... There is plenty of news in this newest *Fear and Loathing (On the Campaign Trail: 1972)* book. ... Thompson detests Eagleton as much as he adores Duane Thomas. He calls him "an opportunistic liar," and "a hack," and "another one of those cheap hustlers," among other things. ... But in the context of such a long and passionate book, such lapses seem almost beautiful... the literary equivalent of Cubism: all rules are broken, we are shown pictures such as no mature, well-trained artist ever painted before, and in the crazy new pictures somehow, we see luminous new aspects of beloved old truths. ... As for those who wish to know more about Thompson and his ideal, his frazzled nervous system, his self-destructiveness, and all that: he is unabridgeable. He is that sort of American author who must be read. He makes exciting, moving collages of carefully selected junk. They must be experienced."—Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. in *Harpers Magazine*

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energies to her "guy" and their three sons. The day of our interview, Reston had just gotten back from a speaking trip to Buffalo. As we swung through the door, Sally Reston was coming down the stairs. She stopped for a moment, broke into a warm smile and sang out, "Hey, it's the Buffalo flash!"

There is reverence for *The New York Times*. On December 24, 1962, in the middle of a strike against the *Times*, Reston wrote, "Dear Santa: All I want for Christmas is *The New York Times* . . . Somebody struck the *Times* in the belief that it's a newspaper, but that is obviously ridiculous. The *Times* is a public institution, like the Yankees or Barney Baruch." To me, he put it more simply: "I'm kind of goofy about this paper." And he knows just how to use the power of the *Times* in getting a story. "He really feels the *Times* is equal to any other institution," says Wicker. "So when he sits down with Dean Rusk or Rogers it's like our Secretary of State meeting their Secretary of State."

There is reverence for ideas. He has campaigned for decades to get them into the paper. "Ideas are news," he argued. "We are not covering the news of the mind as we should." Largely as a result of his efforts, the *Times* assigned Bob Reinhold and Israel Shenker to "news of the mind" beats and inaugurated the "op-ed" page where intellectuals, among others, could express their views directly. And long before that, he was working to encourage some of "the best young minds" in the universities to join the *Times* and to make sure they got the scope and time to do serious, thoughtful work when they got there. Later, when some of those men got restless, Reston tried unsuccessfully to devise a way for them to stay with the *Times* on a contractual basis while doing still more serious, long-term work outside. He argued for development of "a new class of public servants, who move about in the triangle of daily or periodical journalism, the university or foundation and government service," pointing to "a growing and hopeful breed" of such men—McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., John Kenneth Galbraith, Theodore Sorenson, Richard Goodwin and Douglass Cater, among others.

But Reston proved vulnerable to men like those. "The tough-mindedness which he might bring to a politician," says Halberstam, "he never seemed

to bring to eggheads and ideas." Precisely because he is not essentially a man of ideas (he was a mediocre student at the then mediocre University of Illinois), he has an exaggerated awe for those who are. His columns are filled with pithy quotes from Alfred North Whitehead, Paul Valery and Lippmann which he either culls himself from the 54-volume *Great Books of the Western World* in his office or sends his news clerks to dig out of the library. And every chance he gets, he will seek out "the thoughtful people"—Toynbee, C.P. Snow, Jean Monnet or John Gardner.

Those columns have a distinctive ring, like this one on Hamilton Fish Armstrong: "There are so many noisy voices in the world these days, including the shrill and urgent voices of columnists, that it is seldom possible to hear the quieter thoughts of wiser and more thoughtful men." And it helps too if the thoughtful men also happen to be gentlemen of the old school, as evinced in these words from what may be the quintessential Reston column (March 16, 1973):

It seldom happens in these hairy, youthful days that anybody chooses a wise old gentleman for a critical job, but President Nixon has done it again by picking David Kirkpatrick Este Bruce of Virginia to be the first official U.S. representative to the Communist Government of China . . . still spare and handsome, white-haired, cautiously slow, but alert and elegantly courteous . . . if, occasionally, they [Chou and Mao] want to talk about the fundamental questions of the coming world order, Bruce will be equal to their questions . . . Now suddenly he has been called back again to go to Peking, and he and his lovely wife, Evangeline, who was a student of Chinese history at Harvard with John Fairbank . . .

Ah, Harvard! His reverence for ideas seems to focus on the graceful old university by the Charles. When he began choosing "clerks" from the universities in the sixties, a disproportionate number came from Harvard—Steve Roberts, Craig Whitney, Iver Peterson, and Linda Greenhouse (Radcliffe '68). When Nixon appointed three new cabinet members—Eliot Richardson, Caspar Weinberger and Roy Ash—what struck Reston as most

significant about the appointments was that all three had gone to Harvard. And when student unrest came to Harvard in the spring of 1969, only the crustiest Harvard alumni rallied to the support of President Nathan Pusey as he did.

Reston did not care much for the student rebels anywhere. "He saw that whole era as a return to incipient Yahooism in which students were trying to get involved in things which should be left to serious and substantial men," says Russell Baker. But Harvard sent him into a real dither, and finally into a bitter public feud with the "liberal caucus" in the faculty who he felt had let President Pusey down. One column ended with a revealing observation: "The Harvards have been telling us for generations that they were just like other people, only better. And now both points are in dispute." The events in Cambridge proved so disconcerting to Reston because he really did believe the Harvards were better.

There are those who feel Reston's evolution of late is a bit like that of his friend Hubert Humphrey (of whom he wrote in 1968, "If Presidents were elected by the thousand best-informed men in Washington on the basis of who would make the best President, he would be No. 1 at last"). Both men were symbols and spokesmen for the great American liberal center in the 'fifties. But, largely as a result of the Vietnam war, the liberal center shifted during the past decade and their constituencies shifted leftward with it.

Some of those who have worked for and with Reston over the years may wish that he were a little less cozy with power, a little less reverential toward the System, a little more outspoken about the evils they detect in American society. But they still revere him for his immense kindness, decency, generosity, professionalism and integrity. "My career would have been nothing without him," says Halberstam. "He was like a blocking back for me." So what they feel more than anything else these days is a sense of loss. "Those of us who honor and love him wish that he were still walking with us," says Halberstam. "It's like what Chicago fans felt in 1919 about Shoeless Joe Jackson. Say it ain't so, Joe. Say it ain't so, Scotty."

(HELLBOX)

continued from page 2

accused him of putting out misinformation. Ziegler said he stood on his statement. "Do you feel free," Mollenhoff demanded, "to stand up there and lie and put out misinformation and then come around later and just say it is all inoperative? That is what you are doing. You are not entitled to any credibility at all when you do that."

Few Washington reporters, even those of the so-called Eastern Liberal Media, have the nerve to beard the President and his men the way Mollenhoff does. In fact, many of his colleagues consider Mollenhoff—who has written six books and won 18 awards for his reporting besides the Pulitzer—an oddball and a nuisance. If they are right, then more such oddballs and nuisances are just what the Washington press corps needs.

Beneficiary

Ralph Ginzburg has offended the Federals again—this time the Social Security Administration. The trouble started when Ginzburg's magazine, *Moneysworth*, ran a full-page, hard-sell ad headed "Free

Money" that started appearing in newspapers around the country in March. With each new subscription to *Moneysworth*, it offered "absolutely free . . . a comprehensive, lucid, savvy, astonishing new manual entitled *Stake Your Claim! How to Work the Social Security Gold Mine*." The lucid savvy includes answers, the ad says, to such questions as, "Is it true . . . that you should 'shop' for a pension at different Social Security offices since different interpretations of the regulations can result in pensions of different amounts?"

The ad says, too, that "Ralph Ginzburg, the 43-year-old publisher of *Moneysworth* . . . himself collects \$99.40 in Social Security every month and has been getting Social Security since he was 25." And it goes on (and on) with 30 more "questions" and a description of Social Security as "an incredible bonanza . . . so generous . . . for younger Americans . . . that it amounts to Free Money."

The Social Security Administration has responded to the pitch by distributing a draft of a letter-to-the-editor (of any handy publication) to

officials in some 900 Social Security offices around the country. The letter describes the *Moneysworth* ad as "replete with misleading references and innuendoes about the Social Security program." It notes that "Social Security rules and regulations are applied uniformly throughout the Nation. Benefits are automatically calculated by computer in the agency's national headquarters in Baltimore . . . thus making it impossible for an individual to obtain different amounts of benefits by 'shopping around'." And it says that the claim that Ginzburg "is himself a Social Security beneficiary is not correct and never has been."

The letter does not specifically rebut any of the other alleged "misleading references and innuendoes." It probably doesn't elaborate on why Ginzburg himself is allegedly not a beneficiary because Social Security records are confidential by law. The agency's flat denial might itself be interpreted as somewhat misleading, however. It's possible that Ginzburg has collected Social Security benefits since he was 25 on behalf of someone else. To get benefits for himself at his age, though, he

would have to be severely disabled (which he doesn't seem to be).

"The only original material in *Stake Your Claim*," according to the HEW agency, "appears to be the Introduction, a short glossary of Social Security terms and 'Answers to Common and Uncommon Questions'." The rest is derivative. "Of the 57 pages of text, about half are an almost word-for-word reproduction of the content of our booklet, *Social Security Information for Young Families*, updated (with certain oversights) to take account of the 1972 legislation [Social Security amendments]. Another 17 pages is a reprint of the *New York Times Magazine* article of January 14, 1973, by Edwin Dale . . . except that the article as printed originally was titled, 'The Security of Social Security: the Young Pay for the Old.' In *Stake Your Claim*, the article has been retitled, 'Social Security:

A Critical View,' and subheads that did not appear in the original article have been supplied."

The Social Security Administration's booklet review was circulated as an information circular dated April 9. If Social Security is indeed a gold mine, Ginzburg has certainly tried to work it on the cheap.

—BROOKE MARTIN

Corrections

The associate editor of this magazine plays an aggressive game of tennis, but beyond that finds the subject of sports in general totally stupefying. The editor and contributing editor also play aggressive games of tennis and are devoted baseball fans besides. No one on the premises, however, knows much about basketball. We hope this will help explain—if not excuse—why, in bestowing rosebuds on John McPhee last month, we managed to place his friend, Bill Bradley, in Princeton University's class of '53 when in fact the star forward of the New York Knickerbockers graduated in 1965. Our apologies to Bradley and all his supporters, and best of luck to the Knicks, who as of this writing appear to have a good shot at winning the Stanley Cup.

(LETTERS)

Don't Knock It

Do the Jehovah Witnesses really deserve that gratuitous, fashionably vicious assault by Barbara Harrison (MORE—April, 1973)? Any organization that has survived and prospered as the JW sect has, especially in our dollar-obsessed society, obviously has something going for it that escaped Ms. Harrison.

We too have had frequent Sunday morning visits from the Witnesses. I've found them to be gentle people, maybe a bit tenacious but, on the whole, people to be admired. The facts—minus the slurs—reported by Ms. Harrison only reinforce my impression.

Two questions: How are the Jehovah Witnesses "Cashing In On Doomsday"? Ms. Harrison doesn't make it clear. And what's her article doing in a journalism review anyway? She says precious little about the content of *The Watchtower* and *Awake* and nothing about the authors.

May Jahveh be merciful at Armageddon, Ms. Harrison, if the JW's turn out to be right.

—Robert Carroll
Daily News
New York, N.Y.

(CLASSIFIEDS)

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